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THE DRAPIER'S LETTERS: A STUDY IN  
SWIFT'S RHETORICAL AND SATIRICAL METHODS

by

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B.A. Yale University, 1960

Presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

1964

Approved by:

  
Chairman, Board of Examiners

  
Dean, Graduate School

NOV 24 1964

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In writing The Drapier's Letters, Jonathan Swift applied his literary talents to a contemporary Irish political problem. The purpose of the Letters was to unite public opinion solidly against the admission into the Irish economy of halfpence coined under a royal patent by William Wood, an Englishman. As political propaganda The Drapier's Letters were highly successful, largely because of Swift's masterful utilization of various rhetorical and satirical devices. Swift's recognition of the crucial issues at stake and his ability to exploit the political ramifications of Wood's Patent were, of course, equally important to the success of the Letters. Thus, the literary and political merits of The Drapier's Letters are closely related, so closely that a study of the rhetorical techniques of the Letters, the essential purpose of this essay, must begin with a consideration of the historical background.

The condition of Ireland in the eighteenth century was characterized by poverty, squalor, lawlessness, immorality, and struggle. These evils resulted largely from the rigorous persecution and absolute suppression of anything and everything Irish by the controlling English government. Ever since crushing the Rebellion of 1689, in which James II attempted to establish a Catholic monarchy

in Ireland,<sup>1</sup> the English government increased the restrictions on Irish liberty and subordinated the interests of Ireland to those of England. In the years following 1689, England's power over Ireland grew steadily until the Kingdom of Ireland became subject to the virtual whims and caprices of the English rulers. On the other hand, the eighteenth century in Ireland witnessed great strides forward in the quest for Irish liberty and independence. William Molyneux's, The Case of Ireland's Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated, written just before the dawn of the century, stood vigorously and spoke eloquently for the cause of Irish liberty and independence in the years following 1689.

Jonathan Swift's The Drapier's Letters demonstrated boldly that Irish unity could be achieved and that the Irish people could withstand successfully the abuses and excesses of the English government. The brilliant and effective oratory of Henry Flood solidified the nation and its leaders in their determination to gain independence and to eradicate the oppression of the English government. Finally, the flashing language of Henry Grattan on 16 April 1782, in proclaiming their independence to the people and Parliament of Ireland, spoke meaningfully for the efforts and aspirations of all

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<sup>1</sup>Most estimates conclude that the Roman Catholics represented 5/6 of Ireland's population at the beginning of the 18th century and that they owned only 1/20 of the land. See Basil Williams, The Whig Supremacy; 1714-1760 (Oxford, 1939), p. 272.

## Irish patriots in the eighteenth century:

I found Ireland on her knees; I watched over her with a paternal solicitude; I have traced her progress from injuries to arms, and from arms to liberty. Spirit of Swift, spirit of Molyneux, your genius has prevailed! Ireland is now a nation.<sup>2</sup>

Few men of literature have ever played such a significant and effective political role as Jonathan Swift. His efforts on behalf of the Oxford Ministry during the last four years of Queen Anne's reign aided immeasurably in rallying England behind the Tory policy. Likewise, over ten years later in another land and in another cause, Swift's Drapier's Letters served to unite the Irish nation in solid opposition to the same men against whom he had struggled during the years of the Oxford Ministry. Doubtless, the immediate success of The Drapier's Letters provided Swift immense personal satisfaction at the expense of his old enemies who prior to March, 1724, had imagined him safely tucked away in the Deanery of St. Patrick's. Desire for personal and political revenge on his old adversary, Robert Walpole, was not, however, the primary factor which prompted Swift to wield his formidable pen in the matter of Wood's halfpence. Nor, perhaps, was it a Flood-Grattan brand of patriotism. It was, however, a brand of peculiar conviction, probably not always understood completely even by Swift

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<sup>2</sup>Quoted from W. E. H. Lecky, The Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland (New York, 1872), p. 114.

himself, that received its impetus from his deep, personal sense of what is right and his intense abhorrence of what is wrong. In a letter to Pope, Swift states unequivocally his own motivations for entering into the controversy over Wood's halfpence:

I do profess without affectation that your kind opinion of me as a patriot, since you call it so, is what I do not deserve; because what I do is owing to perfect rage and resentment, and the mortifying sight of slavery, folly and baseness about me among which I am forced to live.<sup>3</sup>

Swift's snarling here probably did not fool Pope nor was intended to fool him, who knew so well the depth of Swift's benevolence and compassion, the intensity of which so frequently found voice in the stinging tones of his cutting irony.

As a work of literature The Drapier's Letters are superb; the author molds his characters to the situation, and he fits the situation to his needs. Each word, each sentence, and each paragraph works independently and inter-dependently to express the author's intention. At all times Swift retains absolute control of his language, raising and lowering the intensity of his emotion as the occasion demands, yet always leaving, as Henry Craik has said, a "sense of power in reserve."<sup>4</sup> At one point the passion

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<sup>3</sup>Quoted from Richard Ashe King, Swift in Ireland (London, 1895), p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Henry Craik, The Life of Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin (London, 1882), p. 341.

virtually explodes on the page, while in another place the emotion changes by subtle and nearly imperceptible degrees, and even where the Drapier's veil thinly disguises the Dean of St. Patrick's, the Letters remain within the vision and dimension of M. B., Drapier. Yet, The Drapier's Letters, in addition to their great literary value, have a political significance of the first order. The combination of the literary and political merits of the Letters finds vivid expression in the words of Ashe King:

The Drapier's Letters are epoch-making in that they first taught Ireland the policy and the power of union, of dogged inert resistance, and of strategically organized and directed agitation. Their effect was, in fact, commensurate with their power, and their power of its kind was supreme. It is the power of a deft, vigorous, intent and unerring-eyed wielder of a hammer, who hits each nail on the head and home without one single feint, or flourish, or one single short, or wide, or weak, or wasted stroke.<sup>5</sup>

In short, the Letters are political propaganda in its most effective form. The principal object of them is to condition and mold public opinion. In order to achieve this end Swift employs various rhetorical and satirical devices to discredit his opposition and to advance his own point of view. At one moment he scrupulously quotes the law and bases his argument strictly on fact and legal precedent, proceeding logically to his conclusions by means of unadorned, declarative sentences. On another occasion he exaggerates

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<sup>5</sup>Ashe King, pp. 108-109.



willfully in order to emphasize his point. Frequently, he uses his probing logic to ridicule his opponents' statements. However, he frequently lays aside his dependence on common sense and logic and assails his opponents with harsh and bitter invective. Yet, in another place he subtly condemns his opponents through the method of guilt-by-association. He uses the rhetorical question frequently to suggest certain facts and ideas to his readers. On the other hand, he often advises and exhorts his readers directly to follow a specific course of action. The rhetorical device of analogy serves Swift throughout the Letters to illustrate and emphasize his statements and ideas. Sarcasm and irony work constantly in the Letters to bend the reader's opinion to Swift's will. Likewise, the device of repetition allows Swift to stress the essential points of his argument clearly and constantly so that his readers never lose sight of the fundamental issues at stake. These are the most significant stylistic devices that characterize the Letters. Swift's ability to utilize these various techniques in an effective and advantageous manner represents the principal literary merit of the Letters. Therefore, a literary study of The Drapier's Letters must focus primarily on Swift's rhetorical and satirical methods.

The Drapier's Letters are successful political tracts because they accomplish their purpose--to defeat the project of Wood's halfpence. Swift achieves this success through

his absolute mastery of the techniques of satire and rhetoric and through his total awareness of the political climate of his time and place. Consequently Swift does not limit his discourse strictly to William Wood and his halfpence. He turns his pen against the English government and develops his theme into an assertion of Irish independence. Swift transcends the affair of Wood's halfpence in The Drapier's Letters, and his satire becomes a vehicle of expression for Irish liberty. The manner in which Swift develops this theme remains one of the most notable literary achievements of The Drapier's Letters.

ii

No political crisis, no matter how insignificant in the course of world affairs (as indeed was the controversy over Wood's halfpence), arises of its own accord without any antecedents. Or, as Ashe King has suggested, it is "not the match or the kindling which makes a conflagration, but the long-accumulated fuel," to which he adds,

The Drapier's Letters was the match, the foulness of the origin and the insolence of the imposition of Wood's halfpence was the inflammable kindling, but thirty years of oppression and plunder, of the sacrifice of every Irish interest and industry, of the ostracism of every Irishman from every Irish preferment, of gratuitous disregard of every Irish wish and want solely, to quote . . . from Archbishop Boulter, because it was Irish, this was the long-accumulated fuel.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 117-118.

Prior to the study of the actual conflagration and the manner in which it wrought its destruction, a closer scrutiny of the faggots and logs that made up the "long-accumulated fuel" is in order.

The major causes which impeded Irish prosperity and contributed to the degradation of the Irish people in the eighteenth century were the restraints on Irish trade and the consequent ruin of their manufacturing industry, the system of absenteeism, the political dependence of the Irish Parliament on the English government, and the penal laws which discriminated against the Roman Catholic populace.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the Protestant Irish were so intent on suppressing the Roman Catholics that the powerful and moderately well-to-do Ulster Presbyterians helped the Church of Ireland Protestants pass the Sacramental Test Act of 1704, which contained a clause virtually barring themselves from public office, solely because most of that Act set forth laws that further restricted the freedom of the Catholics.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>George O'Brien, The Economic History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century (Dublin and London, 1918), p. 381. For a short discussion of the plight of the Roman Catholics see Oliver W. Ferguson, Jonathan Swift and Ireland (Urbana, Illinois, 1962), pp. 15-20. For a more detailed account of the penal laws, see W. E. H. Lecky, A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century (London, 1892), I, 136-171. For case histories of actual abuses resulting from the penal laws, see James A. Froude, The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century (New York, 1873), I, 417-446.

<sup>8</sup>Ferguson, pp. 17-18.

It was fashionable at this time for Irish landlords to reside in London, perhaps coming to Ireland only long enough each year to collect their rents or perhaps never coming to Ireland at all. Many of the absentee landlords would sublease their estates for long periods of time to a particular tenant, thereby precluding the necessity ever to visit Ireland. As the value of land increased, however, the original tenant discovered that it was more profitable to lease the land to a new tenant than to farm the land. Hence, a class of middlemen arose who speculated in land rental.<sup>9</sup> Such speculation led to excessive rents being imposed on the peasant. The peasants seldom were able to pay the full rent even by the most diligent application. Therefore, rarely was the peasant capable of making a profit for himself, and his increased labor seemed only to return extra profits to the middleman. As a result of this system, the tenant soon became content with producing little more than subsistence for his family and himself. He was similarly discouraged from improving the land for fear of causing the rent to be raised the following year because of the improvements. The system, therefore, was inherently corrupt and hopelessly self-degrading.

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<sup>9</sup>Many of these middlemen in turn became landlords in their own right as the value of land increased. In fact many of the original tenants even became absentees. Lecky states that frequently four or five persons would be between the owner and cultivator of the soil (A History, I, 214).

Secure from the evils of their neglect, the absentee landlords drained Ireland of a significant proportion of its wealth<sup>10</sup> in order to live in the bustling and fashionable world of London. Statutes existed which provided that "absenteeism should not free a landlord from contributing heavily to the revenues of the country upon whose resources he preyed."<sup>11</sup> Custom, however, effected sufficient disregard for these statutes that in the eighteenth century they had become, as Professor Craik declares, "a dead letter."

Hardly less noticeable as a moral abuse, though not as important financially,<sup>12</sup> was the system which gave the great majority of political and ecclesiastical appointments to Englishmen. This system not only permitted England to maintain first-hand control of the Irish government, but it afforded the Ministry an excellent manner in which to reward incompetent favorites or to remove from the political scene in England antagonists within their own ranks. Although laws

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<sup>10</sup>In "An Humble Address to Both Houses of Parliament," Swift reckons, "The Rents of Land in Ireland, since they have been of late so enormously raised, and screwed up, may be computed to about two millions; whereof one third part, at least, is directly transmitted to those, who are perpetual absentees in England." Lecky quotes Matthew Prior's calculation that in 1730 the absentees spent about £620,000 in England. Nor did this abuse diminish during the eighteenth century; Lecky quotes two sources, one estimating the sum in 1769 to be £1,200,000, the other more modestly calculating the sum in 1779 to be £732,000 (A History, I, 213).

<sup>11</sup>Craik, p. 336.

<sup>12</sup>Lecky, A History, I, 212-213.

were in existence which required the residence in Ireland of all office-holders, these laws generally were ignored. In fact, the office-holder who spent more than the minimum time required by the duties of his office was a rare person.

There were even

stories of those who had landed at Ringsend on Saturday night, had received the Sacrament at the nearest parish church on Sunday, taken the oaths on Monday morning in the Courts, and set sail for England in the afternoon leaving no trace of their existence in Ireland save their names on her Civil List as recipients of a salary.<sup>13</sup>

The absence of a sizeable portion of the aristocracy, as well as many of the political and spiritual leaders, is sufficient cause for the break-down in morality, initiative, and lawfulness of any people. Add to this situation, however, the fact that these "leaders" withdrew a substantial proportion of the nation's wealth each year, and the decadent and desperate situation of Ireland in the eighteenth century becomes brutally evident.

The domination of Ireland by England was not a unique development of the eighteenth century. Traditionally and legally, Ireland recognized the King of England as the King of Ireland. Inasmuch as the English monarch seldom, if ever, saw fit to visit his Irish kingdom, much less govern it directly, the administrative and executive powers of the Irish government were vested in the King's personal

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<sup>13</sup>Craik, p. 337.

representative, the Lord Lieutenant. This office was held almost without exception by an English nobleman, who was responsible to the current English Ministry and who was expected to uphold the English interests in Ireland. Regrettably, many of the Lords Lieutenants were once-powerful or potentially powerful English politicians, who, though fallen from grace, were too considerable to receive total political extinction; also, many of the Lords Lieutenants were political incompetents who for one reason or another, merited the favor of the English Ministry. During the crisis over Wood's halfpence, Ireland possessed the services of both types of Lord Lieutenant, the Duke of Grafton embodying the latter sort and Lord Carteret the former.

Although the existing monarchial system afforded little autocracy to Ireland under the generally apathetic Lords Lieutenants, Ireland was theoretically a separate and distinct kingdom. She had her own Parliament, consisting of Lords and Commons, a Privy Council, a complete system of courts, and an established church, the Church of Ireland.<sup>14</sup> Yet, during the reign of Henry VII, the English Parliament

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<sup>14</sup>Most of the high positions in the Church of Ireland were held by political appointees from England. These appointees were able to exert their influence both through their ecclesiastical positions and through their membership in the House of Lords. Swift, himself, received his appointment as Dean of St. Patrick's by political preferment, although he always felt that the rather insignificant position of Dean was not commensurate with his exceptional contributions to the Oxford Ministry.

enacted Poynings' Laws which virtually relegated Ireland to the status of a dependent kingdom. It is Poynings' Laws in particular against which Swift rails in the fourth Drapier's Letter when he declares,

We have indeed obliged our selves to have the same King with them, and consequently they are obliged to have the same King with us. For the Law was made by our own Parliament, and our Ancestors then were not such Fools (whatever they were in the preceding Reign) to bring themselves under I know not what Dependence, which is now talked of without any Ground of Law, Reason or Common Sense.<sup>15</sup>

Under the terms of Poynings' Laws the Irish Parliament could not convene without the consent of the King and the English Privy Council, and the Irish Parliament was required to submit all bills to the English Privy Council who could amend, alter, or reject them as they thought fit. An amended bill would return to the Irish Parliament who must then accept it or reject it without further alteration.<sup>16</sup> Under such

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<sup>15</sup>The Drapier's Letters to the People of Ireland against Receiving Wood's Halfpence, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford, 1935), pp. 78-79, hereafter referred to as "Davis." All subsequent quotations from The Drapier's Letters, unless noted otherwise, will come from this text, and the page numbers will be cited in parentheses at the end of the quotation rather than in a footnote. One of Henry VIII's most clever diplomatic accomplishments was to offer the Irish the opportunity to become his subjects in order to settle the unrest occasioned under his father by Poynings' Laws, among other things. See Froude, I, 29-35. Swift doubtless was aware of the duplicity involved in the Irish acceptance of the English Monarch as their own, but here he uses the fact that Ireland had chosen the King of England as its own as a positive argument to discredit Poynings' Laws and the entire concept of Ireland as a dependent state because it shared the same King with England.

<sup>16</sup>Ferguson, pp. 7-13, contains a concise, but thorough discussion of the laws prejudicial to Ireland's autonomy on which much of this discussion is based.



restrictions the Irish Parliament functioned as little more than a puppet of the English Privy Council.

### iii

In spite of the manifest subordination of the Irish government to the English Privy Council, the English did little to discriminate against Irish trade before the Restoration. In 1663, however, Parliament passed a law that all goods being shipped to English colonies must be loaded only at certain English ports and in English ships. In 1666, Parliament passed another law which levied prohibitive duties on the importation of Irish livestock into England. This Act alone destroyed nearly three-fourths of the existing Irish foreign trade. This Act could have exerted a worthwhile effect in Ireland by restoring vast tracts of pasture to tillage, thus producing employment and alimentation for thousands of starving peasants who had been displaced by the conversion of arable land to pasture. Unfortunately, an adequate market still remained for Irish livestock on the Continent, and the middlemen were generally reluctant to become involved in the more tedious negotiations with a much larger number of tenants that would be required by cultivation of the land. In the end, therefore, this Act only served to impoverish the country further by destroying a vital source of foreign exchange, while the landlords and middlemen failed to take advantage of the

situation to mitigate the economic evils of the country-side.

The Woolen Act of 1699 prohibited the export of Irish woolen goods and limited the exportation of unfinished wool to a few English ports. This Act virtually blockaded the last avenue through which Ireland could obtain a significant quantity of foreign exchange. Granted, the Irish did engage in the practice of smuggling woolen goods to the Continent, but the revenue gained from such transactions was miniscule compared to the receipts of a legitimate trade. Although the basic doctrine of Mercantilist economics favored discrimination against all foreign products for the benefit of home industry, Ireland's unique form of government denied her the ability to enter into the economic battle with other nations on a fair footing. In the words of George O'Brien,

The reason Ireland suffered so much under the mercantile system was that her power of retaliation was paralyzed, as her Parliament was dependent, and unable to use against other countries the weapons which were used against Ireland.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, under the terms of Poynings' Laws Ireland was unable to pass laws protecting its own goods against English competition, but England was able to pass laws to restrict and regulate Irish trade in order to benefit her own trade.

Under such circumstances, Ireland could resort only to extra-legal methods of promoting her own products.

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<sup>17</sup>George O'Brien, p. 385.

Smuggling, already mentioned, was one recourse. Another method, highly effective if it could be implemented and executed effectively, was the boycott of foreign, and particularly English goods. In 1720 Swift published his "Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture," which suggested to the Irish people that the best means of promoting their own products and of eliminating foreign competition in Ireland was to purchase only those goods produced by Irish industry. Swift did not succeed in organizing a boycott at this time, but in this pamphlet he planted the seeds of resistance that would flourish briefly, though boldly, four years hence; for, in the words of Ashe King,

Swift's 'Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture' aimed to revive, not the extinguished trade only, but the extinguished spirit also, of the 'colonists.'<sup>18</sup>

Swift was not gentle in this pamphlet to the Dublin citizens who caused him to live amid "slavery, folly, and baseness," as he proposed a seemingly obvious solution to a good many of their ills. He declared,

The Scripture tells us 'that oppression makes a wise man mad:' therefore, consequently speaking, the reason why some men are not mad is that they are not wise. However, it were to be wished that oppression would in time teach a little wisdom to fools.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ashe King, p. 105.

<sup>19</sup>Swift, "A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture." Quoted from Craik, p. 341.

This invincible, ironic logic and angry indignation later becomes the hallmark of the Drapier, who, in telling "the plain Story of the Fact," was able to "teach a little wisdom to fools" and lead a unified Irish populace in a successful boycott of Wood's halfpence.

In addition to the several Acts mentioned above and the unjust application of Poynings' Laws during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, one other Act of the English Parliament was passed in 1720 which inspired anti-British feeling in Ireland and which doubtless was clearly in the front of Swift's mind as he penned each line of The Drapier's Letters. This was the Act for Better Securing the Dependency of Ireland on the Crown of Great Britain.<sup>20</sup> This Act resulted from a case in which the Irish House of Lords reversed a decision of the Irish Court of Exchequer. The case was in turn appealed to the English House of Lords, who set aside the judgment of the Irish Lords. Finally, the Irish Lords appealed to the King who put the case once again before the English Lords who not only upheld their earlier decision, but also introduced an Act

affirming that the English Parliament had the right and authority to make laws for Ireland, and that the Irish House of Lords had no right to act as a court of appeal.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Craik, p. 340.

<sup>21</sup>R. Barry O'Brien (ed.), Two Centuries of Irish History 1691-1870, 2nd. ed. (London, 1907), p. 73. For a more thorough discussion of the controversial Annesley Case, see R. B. O'Brien, p. 73, or Lecky, A History, I, 447-448.

The former provision certainly was no news to the Irish, but the loss of appellate jurisdiction by the Irish Lords was a severe blow to the already tattered pride of an impoverished and oppressed nation. The Irish people were seething with discontent, needing only a specific, concrete effigy of the English government on which to spill forth the burning lava of their hate. Perhaps Swift's "Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture" encompassed an issue that was too general or unappealing. In the matter of Wood's halfpence, however, Swift had a real and tangible victim on whom he could vent his own anger and toward whom he could direct the fury of the Irish people. In William Wood, Esquire and Hard-Ware-Man, Swift found a scapegoat to answer for all the ills imposed upon Ireland by the English government; and to improve on Swift's chances of success in this effort, Wood's own brashness and insolence aggravated and antagonized the Irish to such a degree that the heretofore disunited and factional people of Ireland became as one behind Swift's roaring whisper: "BEWARE OF WOOD'S HALFPENCE" (p. 142).

iv

The condition of the coinage in Ireland in the early part of the eighteenth century was dreadful. Specifically, there was no Irish mint, therefore no coinage distinctly Irish. In fact, gold and silver coins of all countries, including England, circulated freely in Ireland at this time.

The value of these coins was ascertained by their particular weight or by proclamations regulating the rates of foreign coin issued by Parliament every two to five years. The values fixed by Proclamation were not usually in accord with the true value of the coin, the coins generally being devalued slightly. Moreover, the English Parliament forbade the exporting of English coin, thus causing the East India Company to pay a premium in Ireland for all foreign coins of gold and silver. These situations resulted in an outward flow of gold and silver coin from Ireland "to the great detriment of trade."<sup>22</sup> In fact, R. B. O'Brien has stated,

So hampered was trade on account of the state of the coinage, that wages could not be paid in coin--weavers for instance, often being paid their wages in cloth, which they were sometimes compelled to exchange for half its value.<sup>23</sup>

As deplorable as was the condition of the gold and silver coinage, the copper coinage provided a worse problem for Irish trade. Counterfeiting abounded in the Ireland of this day, and by far the bulk of the counterfeiting occurred in the realm of the copper coinage. This is not to say that there was no counterfeiting of gold or silver coin, but it was somewhat easier to detect in the case of gold and silver than in copper; also the Irish Parliament had enacted a law in 1709 that prohibited the counterfeiting of foreign coin<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>George O'Brien, pp. 345-348.

<sup>23</sup>R. B. O'Brien, p. 49.

<sup>24</sup>George O'Brien, p. 347.

in which category almost all of the gold and silver coin was included. The actual conditions under which the copper coin for Ireland was minted, moreover, invited counterfeiters to try their hand; for, the primary motive behind the minting of the legal copper coin was profit, and in this sense the minters differed little from the counterfeiters. Furthermore, although the legal coiners had certain regulations and restrictions to follow, in actual practice these rules must not have been applied with any conscience or vigor, as is attested by the infamous quality of those circulating coins assayed by Sir Isaac Newton in April, 1724.<sup>25</sup>

In the absence of a mint, Ireland was furnished with copper coin by private individuals who received grants or patents from the King to mint copper coin for a certain length of time. For instance, in 1660 Charles II issued a patent to Sir William Armstrong to coin farthings in Ireland for a period of twenty years. Then, in 1680 Armstrong and Colonel George Legge received a patent to coin copper half-pence for twenty-one years. They immediately sold the patent to John Knox, who later sold it to Colonel Roger Moore.<sup>26</sup> With so much handling and transferring of the patent (each

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<sup>25</sup>"Report of the Assay on Wood's Coinage, Made by Sir Isaac Newton, Edward Southwell, Esq., and Thomas Scroope, Esq." Temple Scott (ed.), The Drapier's Letters (Vol. VI of The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, D.D., London, George Bell, 1897-1908), Appendix II, pp. 209-211, hereafter referred to as "Temple Scott."

<sup>26</sup>George O'Brien, p. 350.

holder determined to make his goodly share of profit), there could be little wonder that the coinage had declined to such a debased condition.

To make matters worse, when King James instigated the Rebellion of 1689, he took the responsibility of coining money into his own hands. He made vast quantities of brass money which he made current by Proclamation on June 18, 1689. For the most part, this coinage was poorly minted and composed of base metal. After the defeat of James, William III abolished this coinage; however, Colonel Roger Moore continued to coin halfpence under his patent, and he issued so much that the currency became undervalued.<sup>27</sup> In fact, when Lord Cornwallis petitioned in 1700 for a renewal of his patent, the entire matter was referred to the Lords Justices, who

could not advise the coinage of more base money, 'which, not being of an intrinsic value, the House of Commons here in their last session were very apprehensive might at some time prove a great loss to the kingdom.'<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, in 1722 "a memorial was presented to the Lords of the Treasury complaining of the base quality of the copper coinage then circulating."<sup>29</sup> Apparently, the Lords of the Treasury felt that the best manner in which to

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<sup>27</sup>George O'Brien, p. 350.

<sup>28</sup>Lecky, A History, I, 450.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., I, 451.



eliminate this problem would be to issue a new coinage. This decision would have had obvious merit if the Lords of the Treasury had been willing or able to abolish all the previous issues and the myriads of counterfeits that were then circulating. As it was, however, a new issue of coin, especially one that would not be strictly controlled and regulated, seemed only to compound the ills which already beset the condition of Ireland's copper coinage.

Nevertheless, on July 12, 1722, William Wood, Esquire, received a patent from the Crown which permitted him to coin halfpence and farthings during a period of fourteen years for distribution in Ireland. The whole quantity of copper to be coined was not to exceed 360 tons, and only 100 tons could be coined in the first year, which would leave twenty tons for each of the succeeding years. One pound avoirdupois could not be made into more halfpence and farthings than would make thirty pence. This fact in itself set the value of this coin considerably below its English counterparts in which one pound of copper was made into only twenty-three pence. The patent also declared the coinage

to pass and to be received as current money, by such as shall or will, voluntarily and willingly, and not otherwise, receive the same, within the said kingdom of Ireland, and not elsewhere.<sup>30</sup>

In terms of actual money, Wood's Patent allowed him

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<sup>30</sup>Temple Scott, p. 4. This quotation was taken by Scott directly from Wood's Patent.

to issue and utter 100,800 pounds sterling over the fourteen year period.<sup>31</sup> This sum represented approximately one-fourth of the total coin current in Ireland, an overwhelmingly and unnecessarily large proportion of copper to gold and silver. This ratio contrasted markedly with the situation in England where copper coin accounted for only one-hundredth of the total coinage.<sup>32</sup> The sum of copper to be coined by Wood, therefore, seemed to all but the most partial partisans of the English Ministry to be dangerously large. Lord Midleton, the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, who usually was sympathetic to the English, denied that any additional copper coin was needed in Ireland. Archbishop King of Dublin, a strong Irish partisan, said that there were already too many halfpence in Ireland and that the country needed more sixpence, shilling, halfcrown, and crown pieces. Even Archbishop Boulter, Primate of Ireland, who unequivocally and forcefully supported the English interests, declared during the furor raised over Wood's halfpence that even £40,000 would represent one-eighth of all the copper coin and that this was far too much.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Most early commentators on Wood's halfpence accept the Drapier's tally of £108,000, but later scholars have generally determined upon £100,800 as the correct sum. It is unlike Swift to be mathematically imprecise, except when it serves his own purpose. Here, he doubtless set on the figure of one-hundred and eight thousand pounds simply because it was easier for everyone to say than one-hundred-thousand and eight-hundred pounds.

<sup>32</sup>George O'Brien, p. 350.

<sup>33</sup>Lecky, A History, I, 452.

Aside from the fact that Wood's Patent established the value of his halfpence and farthings beneath that of corresponding English coin, and aside from the fact that Wood's Patent allowed the country to be virtually flooded with copper coin, there were two other significant factors which suggested further debasement of Wood's coin. Wood had

covenanted to pay to the King's clerk or comptroller of the coinage, £200 yearly, and £100 per annum into his Majesty's treasury.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to the £4200 represented by this agreement, Wood reportedly paid the King's mistress, the Duchess of Kendal, a £10,000 bribe in order to obtain the Patent.<sup>35</sup> The total of these two expenses alone represents fourteen per cent of the total value of the entire coinage under the terms of the Patent. If Wood needed to recoup these losses, pay the ordinary expenses of minting, transportation, and exchange, and reap a normal profit for his own efforts in the undertaking, then the Irish could expect to receive a sorry coin from the mint of Mr. Wood. Moreover, the fact that Wood's

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<sup>34</sup>Temple Scott, p. 4. Scott points out that the figures of £800 to the Treasury and £200 to the Comptroller, which some sources indicate, are erroneous. Even so, the sums Wood contracted to pay are quite substantial.

<sup>35</sup>This figure is so well-known and established that scholars have never really questioned its veracity. Ferguson believes that William Coxe, Memoirs of the Life and Administration of Sir Robert Walpole, Earl of Orford (London, 1798), is the earliest source that establishes the truth of this report.

halfpence and farthings were already circulating to some degree in Ireland before any official notification of the Patent had been sent from the English government to the Irish government magnified the worst doubts and fears of the Irish as to the fate they would suffer at the hands of William Wood.

## II

Inasmuch as Wood's Patent had been entirely settled in London without any consultation of the Irish Parliament or the Commissioners of the Revenue in Dublin,<sup>1</sup> the Irish government was rightfully indignant when rumors of Wood's Patent came to its attention in late July, 1722. A letter dated August 7, 1722, from the Commissioners of the Revenue in Dublin to Edward Hopkins, Secretary to the Duke of Grafton, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, speaks volumes in describing the lack of rapport and understanding between the governments of Ireland and England at this time. The letter commences:

We were much surprised by a Letter from our Agent Mr. French, giving us an Account of a Patent, which is about to be passed in favour of some Private Persons to authorize them to Coin Half Pence and Farthings, for the Use of this Kingdom, together with a Copy of a Memorial delivered by him to the Lords of the Treasury relating thereto.<sup>2</sup>

Nearly one month after the effective date of Wood's Patent the Commissioners of the Revenue in Dublin were still ignorant of its existence. The Commissioners go on in this letter to explain the purpose of their memorial<sup>3</sup> which "drew attention to the abuses of the Copper Coinage made by Col.

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<sup>1</sup>Davis, p. xi.

<sup>2</sup>Almost the entire texts of this letter and the subsequent letter to the Lords Commissioners are reproduced in Davis, pp. xii-xiv.

<sup>3</sup>See above, p. 21.

Roger Moore in King William's reign," and which warned that "such a Patent will be highly Prejudicial to the Trade and Welfare of this Kingdom, and more particularly to his Majesty's Revenue." When they obtained no results from this letter, the Commissioners sent a letter directly to England, respectfully addressed to the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury, in which they advised once again that "such a Patent will be highly prejudicial to the Trade and Welfare of this Kingdom." Nevertheless, no one heeded these pleas, and Wood continued to make preparations to issue his coin throughout the entire kingdom of Ireland.

During the next few months the problem slowly developed into a major conflict between the English and the Irish. As early as September 3, 1722, Archbishop King was suggesting a concerted action on the part of the Irish against Wood's halfpence when he pointed out that the "only one remedy" was the refusal to accept Wood's coins on the grounds that the "Patent obliges none but such as are willing" to receive the coin.<sup>4</sup> Nothing of note happened, however, until the Duke of Grafton landed in Ireland on August 13, 1723. In the meantime, the Irish had been gathering into a small, but determined force, rigidly opposed to Wood's halfpence. In fact, shortly after the arrival of Grafton, James Maculla published one of the earliest pamphlets outlining the

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<sup>4</sup>King to Annesley. Quoted by Ferguson, p. 96.

dangers to Ireland inherent in Wood's coinage, entitled "Ireland's Consternation in the Loosing of Two Hundred Thousand Pound of their Gold and Silver for Brass Money." In "Ireland's Consternation," Maculla advances the idea that a mining and smelting concern, in which Wood figured prominently, were the real undertakers of the project and that they intended to make their profit by coining inferior alloy. Furthermore, Maculla claims that they were using Irish copper, which was sent to Bristol and improperly refined; thus they were not only robbing Irish industry of employment but were purposely degrading the quality of the copper to be used in the coin. Maculla points out that a large number of these coins had already reached Ireland, that some were in circulation, that there were no means of checking the quantities Wood put into circulation, that some coins were lighter than others, and that all of them were badly made so to invite counterfeiting. Maculla further declared that until the Irish Parliament could rectify the situation, the people of Ireland should refuse to accept this coin.<sup>5</sup>

The Irish Parliament convened on September 9, 1723, and four days later the Parliament sent a request to the Lord Lieutenant for a copy of Wood's Patent. Grafton's

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<sup>5</sup>A synopsis of the major points of "Ireland's Consternation" can be found in Davis, Appendix II, pp. 352-353, and H. R. Wagner, Irish Economics: 1700-1783, A Bibliography with Notes (London, 1907), pp. 15-16.

secretary, Edward Hopkins, then advised Parliament that the Lord Lieutenant did not have a copy of the Patent. Commons immediately ordered a full examination and investigation of the matter to start on September 16. On this date Hopkins arrived in Commons with a copy of the Patent, offering the flimsy excuse that the Patent had arrived since his last communication with them.<sup>6</sup> Finally, both Houses of the Irish Parliament sent separate Resolutions to King George pointing out the dangers of the Patent and implying that his Majesty should revoke the Patent for the good of Ireland.<sup>7</sup> Having sent their Resolutions to the King, the Lords and Commons of Ireland decided to deal with no business until an answer

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<sup>6</sup>Temple Scott, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup>Temple Scott, loc. cit., summarizes the Resolutions thus:

"(1) That Wood's patent is highly prejudicial to his Majesty's revenue, and is destructive of trade and commerce, and most dangerous to the rights and properties of the subject.

(2) That for the purpose of obtaining the patent Wood had notoriously misrepresented the state of the nation.

(3) That great quantities of the coin had been imported of different impressions and of much less weight than the patent called for.

(4) That the loss to the nation by the uttering of this coin would amount to 150 per cent.

(5) That in coining the halfpence Wood was guilty of notorious fraud.

(6) 'That it is the opinion of this Committee, that it hath been always highly prejudicial to this kingdom to grant the power or privilege of coining money to private persons; and that it will, at all times, be of dangerous consequence to grant any such power to any body politic, or corporate, or any private person or persons whatsoever.'"



came to their petitions.<sup>8</sup> In so doing, they held up the Money Bill to support the English establishment in Ireland and to pay pensions to such undeserving Hanoverian-English nobles as the Duchess of Kendal. Thereupon, Parliament recessed and waited for an answer from the King.

On December 12, Parliament reconvened to hear his Majesty's reply which had arrived during the recess. For the most part the tone of the King's letter was ambiguous and apologetic. He expressed regret over previous abuses of Royal Patents, and he promised to

give the necessary orders for enquiring into and punishing those abuses and . . . do every thing that is in his power for the satisfaction of his people.<sup>9</sup>

As a result of the kind tone of the King's reply, Parliament was deceived into voting the usual two years supplies and allowances for the English interests.<sup>10</sup> Thereafter, both Lords and Commons acknowledged his Majesty's letter and expressed their gratitude for his concern with their problem. Nevertheless, Commons was apparently unwilling to trust too deeply in his Majesty's initiative to satisfy his Irish subjects; thus, they added to their acknowledgment a particular request

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<sup>8</sup>Froude, I, 532.

<sup>9</sup>Quoted by Davis, p. xxii.

<sup>10</sup>Froude, I, 532.

that he will be graciously pleased to give Directions to the several Officers concerned in the Receipt of His Majesty's Revenue, that they do not, on any Pretence whatsoever, receive or utter any of the said Copper Halfpence or Farthings, in any Payments to be made to, or by them.<sup>11</sup>

No immediate answer came to this request, and no order was handed down limiting or prohibiting the "uttering" of Wood's halfpence.

During the last months of 1723 Irish leaders became more united and determined in their opposition to Wood's Patent. The conditions under which the Patent was obtained certainly intensified Irish resentment toward Wood's coin. Ashe King summarizes the state of mind of nearly all the Irish leaders in the following words:

That the minting of the coin of a kingdom--an imperial privilege--should be sold to an iron-monger by a German concubine, who received it as a supplement to wages of her infamy--already paid by Ireland--was but the culminating insult of a series without a break, and without the prospect of a break.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, a boycott of the coin could not be implemented by such feelings alone. Ireland needed someone who could combine the common-sense economic arguments of Maculla with the burning resentment of the Irish leaders and who could instill in every Irishman a detestation of Wood's coin that would be based on both reason and passion. By the end of 1723, however, no such leader had stepped forward.

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<sup>11</sup>Quoted by Davis, p. xxiii.

<sup>12</sup>Ashe King, p. 118.

Any struggle requires two sides. The Irish leaders had already formed their battle lines. The English leaders were equally adamant in their refusal to heed the requests of the Irish. The causes behind Ireland's stand are clear; and although national pride figured significantly in the Irish leaders' antipathy to Wood's Patent, economic considerations provided the foundation for their concern. The English motivations, however, in resisting Ireland's pleas to revoke Wood's Patent appear to be rooted in less noble ground. Ashe King, for instance, suggests,

In the case of the universal rejection by Ireland of Wood's coinage, it was chiefly arrogance which blinded the English Ministers to the real reasons for a stand so dogged and solid.<sup>13</sup>

A letter from Viscount Townshend to the Duke of Grafton, dated October 14, 1723, gives reason for this opinion, while it also reveals further cause for English resistance.

Townshend wrote:

The Irish are so absurdly wrong that I can only laugh at them. Can any one in his right judgment think the King will part with his unquestionable prerogative for such weak objections? . . . Nor is the prerogative all. The King is touched more nearly, and feels his honor highly concerned in the affair.<sup>14</sup>

The tone of such a statement is unmistakably arrogant. Nevertheless, Townshend touches on a point which was a fundamental issue of the day among political philosophers.

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<sup>13</sup>Ashe King, p. 120.

<sup>14</sup>Froude, I, 530-531.

How "unquestionable" was the King's prerogative?<sup>15</sup> In reference to this affair, Townshend doubtless considered the King's prerogative inviolable. As a leading member of the Ministry he was, furthermore, committed to uphold the King's actions before rebellious "colonies." This consideration cannot be underestimated in accounting for the Ministry's policy of ignoring Ireland's petitions. Finally, Townshend's admission, even to the Ministry's henchman, Grafton, that the King "feels his honor highly concerned in the affair" can only be considered ludicrous. The publicity over the Patent indecently exposed King George, whose notoriety in the matter of illicit "liaisons" was already widespread, and Townshend's attempt to justify the Ministry's policy on the grounds of protecting the King's "honor", must have drawn forth a snicker even from the obsequious Duke of Grafton.

Another factor which served to stiffen Irish opposition to the Patent was the insolent and offensive behavior of Wood himself. In the Dublin Flying Post of October 8, 1723, a report appeared which quoted Wood's comments on Ireland's opposition to the Patent. For one thing, Wood

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<sup>15</sup>Locke felt that when "by the Miscarriages of those in Authority it [their power] is forfeited; upon the Forfeiture of their Rulers, or at the Determination of the time set, it reverts to the Society, and the People have a Right to act as Supreme." For a discussion of Locke's theories and their influence on this age, see Basil Williams, The Whig Supremacy: 1714-1760, "Introduction."

chose to defend the King's prerogative and to explicate the function thereof. Such a presumptuous act by a person not officially representing the Crown, and whose only interest in the affair was his own profit, bitterly antagonized the Irish leaders. Moreover, Wood had the gall to insult the intelligence, pride, and integrity of every person in Ireland by declaring,

The coinage may not be all the Irish could wish;  
but do they want to be like starving wretches who  
will not take food that is not cooked exactly  
according to their fancy?<sup>16</sup>

Little did Wood realize how severely he was injuring his own cause by electing to speak for the Crown and the Ministry in defense of his Patent; for his arrogance not only embittered the Irish leaders, it also furnished his antagonists with an effective device to combat the Ministry. By centering an attack on Wood, as the spokesman and representative of the English government, a skillful opponent could direct public opinion against the Patent and point an accusing finger at the Ministry with little fear of sounding overtly seditious. Such an adept propagandist and molder of public opinion resided in Dublin at this time in the person of the not-so-mild Dean of St. Patrick's, Jonathan Swift. There exists no conclusive evidence to tell exactly when Swift decided to enter the battle against Wood's halfpence, but the fury

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<sup>16</sup>Quoted by Craik, p. 348.

of his subsequent personal attacks on Wood and the cleverness of his association of Wood with the English Ministry strongly testify that this report in the Flying Post sowed the dragon's teeth of The Drapier's Letters in the battlefield of Swift's mind. At any rate, six months later the first phalanx of Swift's legion of warriors arrived in the streets of Dublin in the form of "A Letter to the Shopkeepers, Tradesmen, Farmers, and Common-People of Ireland Concerning the Brass Half-Pence Coined by Mr. Woods with a Design to Have them Pass in this Kingdom," by M. B., Drapier.

### III

There are several rhetorical and satirical devices employed by Swift in The Drapier's Letters which contribute to the total success of their intention. Each of these elements used independently doubtless would have aided Ireland's cause in resisting and rejecting Wood's halfpence, but it is impossible to say which particular device would have been most effective. The historical fact, however, is that artfully combined by the genius of Swift, the various methods and devices of The Drapier's Letters exerted a collective force that overwhelmed and defeated the project of Wood's halfpence. Swift employed his sharp, clear prose style to set the important facts of the case before the populace, to dictate to the people the policy they should follow, and to stir their anger and resentment against William Wood. He exaggerated certain facts purposely in order to emphasize a particular point, and he mixed subtle irony with harsh invective in order to expose and ridicule his adversaries. His fertile mind never failed to provide him with the most apt analogies and fitting examples to illustrate his conclusions. The master stroke, however, consisted in Swift's creation of the humble, but determined tradesman, M. B., Drapier.

In the Drapier, Swift found a man who could speak to the people of Dublin in their own terms and on their own

level. Moreover, the Drapier could speak with authority of the possible ill consequences of Wood's halfpence as one who had a personal stake in the matter. On Swift's choice of his persona, Ferguson states,

By using as his mouthpiece a decent, hard-working, moderately prosperous shop-keeper, Swift could accomplish two aims that were essential to the success of his appeal: he could achieve a tone familiar to his audience, and he could dramatize for the ordinary middle-class Dublin citizen the economic catastrophe that the halfpence threatened.<sup>1</sup>

Such a character possibly could succeed in uniting all Irishmen in a common effort against Wood's halfpence; for the Drapier, in his patriotic zeal, did not hesitate time and again to tell the people of Ireland their duty and their need to refuse absolutely, collectively and individually, to accept Wood's coin.

William Ewald points out that as the spokesman for Swift, the Drapier has several functions. He must conceal the identity of the true author. He must inform the uneducated as well as the educated about the nature of the coinage and its dangers for Ireland. He must exhort the Irish not to accept Wood's coin. He must heap abuse on Wood, who stood to profit at Ireland's expense. He must inform the government officials in both England and Ireland that the Irish would not accept Wood's coin and that it would be dangerous to introduce it. Finally, he must show

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<sup>1</sup>Ferguson, pp. 97-98.



Walpole and George I that the Irish opposition to the coinage was not treasonable.<sup>2</sup> Remarkably enough, the first Letter, which was published in March, 1724, fulfilled all of these functions, except, perhaps, for the first. Few people were unaware of the fact--although no concrete proof was evident--that M. B., Drapier, was, indeed, the Dean of St. Patrick's.

Perhaps, the most striking features of the first Letter are the zealous candor and the undeniable conviction with which the Drapier applies himself to his task. He begins the Letter positively and urgently by commanding the attention of his readers for the sake of their own well-being. He declares,

What I intend now to say to you, is, next to your Duty to God, and the Care of your Salvation, of the greatest Concern to your selves, and your Children, your Bread and Cloathing, and every common Necessary of Life intirely depend upon it (p. 3).

By treating this matter with such urgency and seriousness, the Drapier immediately conditions the reader's attitude toward everything that follows. He wants his readers to weigh his words soberly and to ponder them deeply. Thus, he maintains high seriousness while appealing to every responsible fiber of his readers' beings. Each word burns with intensity and rings with emphasis as he declares,

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<sup>2</sup>William Bragg Ewald, Jr., The Masks of Jonathan Swift (Oxford, 1954), p. 100.

Therefore I do most earnestly exhort you as Men, as Christians, as Parents, and as Lovers of your Country, to read this paper with the utmost attention, or get it read to you by others (p. 3).

The last clause here demonstrates one of the traits which gives the Drapier's arguments such force: his ability to contort facts and logic to suit his own ends. The Drapier knows well enough that much of his audience is illiterate. Likewise, he knows the illogicality of addressing written words to the illiterate members of his audience. Nevertheless, one of the principal objects of this Letter is to join the disparate elements of Irish society into a monolithic stand against Wood's halfpence. Thus, by addressing the illiterates directly, he gives them dignity and elevates their station in life by equating them in his address with the literate populace. By this diplomatic maneuver, the Drapier improves his chances of commanding the ears of the illiterate, without whose co-operation a successful boycott of Wood's coin could never come to pass.

A further subtlety on the part of the Drapier is also apparent in the first paragraph. After exhorting everyone to read the pamphlet "with the utmost Attention," he adds, "which that you may do at the less Expence, I have ordered the Printer to sell it at the lowest Rate" (p. 3). Again this information is superfluous, inasmuch as the reader has doubtless already discovered the low rate when he purchased the pamphlet. Furthermore, the difference between

the bulk rate and individual rate on such a pamphlet hardly represented a significant sum even to the poor people of Dublin. What the Drapier is doing, however, is dramatizing the importance of halfpence and farthings in his own mind and in the minds of his readers. By demonstrating his awareness that the smallest sums have real value in the marketplace, the Drapier makes his readers consider the purchasing power of small copper coins. He expands on this point in the next paragraph by artfully combining his readers' general welfare with their need to make their farthings serve them most effectively. He chides,

It is a great Fault among you, that when a Person writes with no other Intention than to do you Good, you will not be at the Pains to Read his advices; One Copy of this paper may serve a Dozen of you, which will be less than a Farthing a-piece (p. 3).

Having associated his readers' "penny-consciousness" with their general well-being, the Drapier can more easily arouse their emotions against Wood's halfpence.

Before proceeding to the matter at hand, however, the Drapier admonishes and condemns the people of Ireland for their failure to heed "A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture," and he criticizes them severely for the subsequent prosecution of the printer of that article. The inclusion of this passage can easily be attributed to Swift's desire to castigate the people for their previous failure to hear his advice. On the other hand, the recalling of this situation serves the Drapier's purposes marvelously.

For one thing, ostensibly there exists no connection between the Drapier and the anonymous author of "A Proposal." Hence, the Drapier's concern over the fate of the pamphlet and its printer appears to be perfectly objective. The important fact here is that the public's behavior in that matter worked against its own best interests. Therefore, the Drapier feels a patriotic duty to admonish the public for the ignorant subversion of its own welfare in that situation and to warn the public against committing such errors in the future. Specifically, the Drapier demands that the public pay close attention to his words, which he writes for the public's own good and to the danger of his own being, loss of his own money, and his own possible ruin. Having criticized the public for its past failures and having stated his own dismay over such behavior, the Drapier, nevertheless, asserts his patriotic zeal and lends great weight to his cause in his next statement:

However I cannot but warn you once more of the manifest Destruction before your Eyes, if you do not behave your selves as you aught (p. 4).

Essentially, the Drapier has provoked his readers' minds to a high level of emotion and activity. Now, he is prepared to explain in detail the situation that confronts them. One of the great virtues of the Drapier's style is to let the reader know precisely what to expect as he proceeds directly and unequivocally to the matter at hand. The Drapier continues,

I will therefore first tell you the plain Story of the Fact; and then I will lay before you how you ought to act in common Prudence, and according to the Laws of your Country (p. 4).

The Drapier is no mild prophet of despair. He approaches his task in a positive and purposeful frame of mind. He appeals to his readers' desire to know the truth and "the plain Story of the Fact." Yet, the Drapier is not content to leave the readers with just the facts of the situation; he must tell them how they "ought to act." The Drapier is preaching to the populace and dictating to them the course they should follow. The crisis over Wood's halfpence demands such measures. Heretofore, the people of Ireland lacked unity of purpose and certainty of action. No weak voice could supply this deficiency adequately. The genius of the Drapier, however, arises from his ability to appeal to the highest values of his readers at the same time that he commands them. Thus, his declaration strikes the readers' sense of truth, prudence, and obedience to the law.

The most important consideration that the Drapier must take into account is that he is writing to achieve a particular and specific purpose. Everything he includes in his Letter must be directed to that end. The Drapier's Letters are not an exercise in rhetoric nor an abstract political treatise. They must, therefore, appeal to the passions and emotions of the reader as much as to his sense of reason and right. To serve this end the Drapier needed

to direct his attack in such a way that he would not irritate the sensitivity of those influential persons who were generally sympathetic to English rule; he must at all costs avoid the label of extremist. In regard to this problem, Ashe King states,

Swift had to pretend the quarrel was with Wood and not with England, and about the quality and the conditions of the coinage, and not about the baseness of its origin and the tyranny of its imposition.<sup>3</sup>

Wood's earlier exhibition of insolence in the Flying Post offered Swift the perfect solution. In publishing this report, the Drapier later said, Wood acted "in so confident a Way, as if he were A better Man than Our whole Parliament put together," a statement designed to irritate the already vulnerable pride of every Irishman. By concentrating his assault on Wood, Swift could skirt the more touchy issues at stake and promote the battle of nations under the guise of a contest between the respective national champions, William Wood and M. B., Drapier. Moreover, Swift's decision to fight the war under these terms--at least for the present time--did not stem from fear of confronting the hordes of English abuses that overran Ireland; he was merely seeking the most advantageous site for the inevitable major conflict. In the words of Professor Ricardo Quintana, Swift recognized the fact that

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<sup>3</sup>Ashe King, p. 119.

before united action against a general policy could be hoped for, it was necessary to arouse consuming hatred for a man of flesh and blood.<sup>4</sup>

William Wood was the man of "flesh and blood," and the Drapier was the man to "arouse consuming hatred" against him.

In presenting "the fact" to his readers, the Drapier takes care to offer only those facts that will suit his purpose and to exhibit them in a manner that will mold his readers' views to his own opinion. The first fact that he chooses to state contains within it an almost natural association between copper coin and counterfeit coin. He states,

The Fact is Thus, It having been many Years since COPPER HALF-PENCE or FARTHINGs were last Coined in this Kingdom, they have been for some time very scarce, and many Counterfeits passed about under the Name of RAPS, several Applications were made to England, that we might have Liberty to Coin New Ones, as in former times we did; but they did not succeed (p. 4).

The fact is true; but the Drapier's allusion to the counterfeit coin makes the reader immediately consider the dangers of minting copper coin. Furthermore, the inclusion of the clause, "that we might have Liberty to Coin New Ones," establishes a subtle association between the state of Ireland's coinage and the state of her liberty. Having created these relationships, the Drapier continues to build

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<sup>4</sup>Ricardo Quintana, The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift (London, 1936), p. 263.

upon them.

The Drapier reports how Wood, "A mean ordinary Man, a Hard-Ware Dealer, procured a Patent under His MAJESTIES BROAD SEAL" (p. 4) to coin copper halfpence and farthings for Ireland. To this fact, however, the Drapier adds, seemingly unobtrusively, one of the major points of the first Letter which he does not elaborate on at all for the moment: "which Patent however did not oblige any one here to take them, unless they pleased." This device of injecting significant facts at random into his discussion acts in a subliminal fashion to make the reader cognizant of the fact by the time the Drapier is ready to expound upon it. For the present, however, he wishes to continue his inferences about counterfeit coin by discussing facts about the composition of English coin and Wood's coin. He states that if a person were to beat English halfpence and farthings to pieces and sell them to a brazier, he would, "not lose above a Penny in a Shilling." On the other hand--and here the reference to counterfeiting becomes obvious--

Mr. WOODS made his HALF-PENCE of such Base Metal, and so much smaller than the English ones, that the Brazier would not give you above a Penny of good Money for a Shilling of his (pp. 4-5).

This direct assertion of the worthlessness of Wood's coin gives it no more value in the reader's mind than the lowest "rap," because this information is included in "the plain Story of the Fact." In actuality, however, the



Drapier exaggerated the baseness of Wood's coin; but such exaggeration functions to discredit Wood's coin thoroughly for his audience and that is one of the primary intentions of his Letter. He must achieve his purpose, and if some distortion of the facts is required, then the Drapier must mold the facts to fit his argument. Henry Craik is perhaps too polite to Swift in accounting for the exaggeration that abounds in the first Letter; nevertheless, his observation is keen and pertinent when he states,

His object was simply to put a scandalous transaction in the grossest aspect possible.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, there is a further point that the Drapier is urging in this passage: he wants to illustrate and emphasize the vast difference in rights, privileges, and property that stands between England and Ireland. Here, the Drapier picks up his inference about Ireland's failure to gain the "liberty" to coin its own money and strengthens the implication of his following statement about Wood's success in winning the Patent. He is striking at the subordination of Ireland's best interests by the English government so that England can enrich herself at Ireland's expense. This theme becomes more evident in his later Letters, and it is perhaps subdued in the first Letter only because the Drapier realizes that he must stick to his present task of discrediting Wood and his halfpence before widening his frontal assault.

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<sup>5</sup>Craik, p. 349.

Now, the Drapier increases the intensity of his attack and substitutes the word, "TRASH," where he had previously referred to "Wood's coin." Yet, in continuing his exposition on the baseness of Wood's coin, the Drapier insinuates the baseness of Wood's character. He declares,

But this is not the Worst, for Mr. WOODS when he pleases may by Stealth send over another and another Fourscore and Ten Thousand Pounds, and buy all our<sup>6</sup> Goods for Eleven Parts in Twelve, under the Value.

In this statement, the Drapier advances the theory expounded by Maculla and others that the absence of proper safeguards could lead to a flooding of the market with copper coin. The Drapier, however, does not treat this matter as an academic issue. Rather than separating the possibility of Wood's sending more than his Patent allows from the projected worthlessness of Wood's coin, the Drapier accepts both assumptions as facts and reduces the potential destructiveness of Wood's project to a matter of simple mathematics. Very simply stated, the Drapier proposes that acceptance of Wood's halfpence by the people of Ireland is equivalent to selling "all our Goods for Eleven Parts in Twelve." And in case any of his audience missed the point, he breaks the situation down into the simplest terms.

For example, if a Hatter sells a Dozen of Hatts for Five Shillings a-piece, which amounts to Three

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<sup>6</sup>Davis, p. 5. Davis also notes the more generally accepted figure of £108,000, which is used in Faulkner's edition of 1735, which was supervised by Swift.

Pounds, and receives the Payment in Mr. WOOD'S Coin, he really receives only the value of Five Shillings (p. 5).

His audience of shopkeepers and tradesmen could not miss the implications of such conditions of trade. Moreover, it was vitally important that the shopkeepers understand this message; for, if the shopkeepers and tradesmen refused to accept Wood's coin, then a successful boycott would come closer to reality.

The Drapier follows this same method of defaming Wood's character and of illustrating the dire consequences that will result from the circulation of Wood's coin later in the Letter when he states,

But WOODS is still working under hand to force his HALF-PENCE upon us,

and he adds that Wood's intention is to force the Army to be paid with his coin. Everyone knew well enough that once the Army received its pay in Wood's coin, there could be little possibility of stopping its circulation. Yet, the Drapier does not take an attitude of defeat in the case of such an eventuality. He assumes that the merchants and shopkeepers will never consider accepting such base coin except by force. Thus, he chooses as gross and violent an illustration as decency allows in order to demonstrate the havoc that will result from the circulation of Wood's coin.

For the common Soldier when he goes to the Market or Ale-house will offer this Money, and if it be refused, perhaps he will SWAGGER and HECTOR, and Threaten to Beat the BUTCHER or Ale-Wife, or take

the Goods by Force, and throw then the bad HALF-PENCE (p. 7).

The Drapier's choice of the swaggering soldier in this illustration is no accident. Beyond the suggestion of violence that Wood's coin is bound to instigate between buyers and sellers, the Drapier clearly associates the imposition of Wood's halfpence on the people of Ireland with the exploitation of a bullied populace by a conquering army. This example implies Swift's belief that the English Ministry was behaving like a drunken, swaggering soldier, exerting force on an innocent and helpless shopkeeper for the sake of his own pleasure.

Even with such an ominous picture of the situation, the Drapier offers a simple and positive solution to the problem.

In this and the like Cases, the Shop-keeper, or Victualer, or any other Tradesmen has no more to do, than to demand ten times the Price of his Goods, if it is to be paid in WOOD'S Money; . . . and not part with his Goods till he gets the Money (p. 7).

The Drapier's principal and primary objective in this Letter is to keep Wood's coin from being circulated in Ireland. Nevertheless, he had no way of knowing that the King would not issue a Proclamation that would make Wood's halfpence current nor order the Army to be paid with Wood's money. Therefore, the inclusion of this extreme example serves the further purpose of instructing the people how to act in case such a Proclamation or order be handed down. He must

overlook no possibility in this Letter because events could easily eradicate the need or the effectiveness of a subsequent Letter. Fortunately, time was to be in the Drapier's favor.

From the social and political consequences foreshadowed by the incipience of Wood's halfpence, the Drapier returns to an argument based on economic considerations. He sets up an economic chain to show how Wood's coin will eventually break the economy of the entire nation. In this description, he increases the intensity of abuse of Wood's coin carefully and effectively as he progresses.

For suppose you go to an ALE-HOUSE with that base Money, and the Landlord gives you a Quart for Four of these HALF-PENCE, what must the Victualer do? His BREWER will not be paid in that Coin, or if the BREWER should be such a Fool, the Farmers will not take it from them for their \*Bere, because they are bound by their Leases to pay their Rents in Good and Lawful Money of England, which this is not, nor of Ireland neither, and the Squire their Landlord will never be so bewitched to take such Trash for his Land, so that it must certainly STOP some where or other, and wherever it stops it is the same thing, and we are all undone (p. 7).

The effectiveness of this passage derives largely from the momentum it achieves formally by the succession of clauses that run into each other. Likewise, the build-up of verbal intensity in reference to Wood's coin contributes significantly to the overall effectiveness. The exuberance of the seemingly spontaneous outburst on the illegality of Wood's

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\*The text defines "Bere" as "A sort of Barley in Ireland."

coin and the almost spiteful reference to the distinction under English law between legality in England and legality in Ireland also lend this passage force. Moreover, in moving through a large segment of the social scale, the Drapier unites the economic and the social issues of the case. This fusing of all the various aspects of the situation is one of the great virtues of the Drapier's style, and it is nowhere more apparent than in the final pronouncement of this passage, which bears the tone of a religiously-inspired prophecy of doom:

and wherever it stops it is the same thing, and we are all undone.

Thus, although the Drapier almost consistently advocates a positive approach to the evils he foresees in Wood's Patent, he can likewise speak with terrifying authority of the absolute destruction made imminent by Wood's Patent.

Although the Drapier's style excels most notably for its boldness and its ability to work with facts, the Drapier's capability to insinuate contributes significantly to the overall effectiveness of The Drapier's Letters. The Drapier uses the power of insinuation in the first Letter to discredit both Wood and the English government by suggesting the infamous manner in which Wood obtained his Patent. As usual, however, he does not limit his discussion to the immediate issue, and he involves a variety of Irish complaints in his argument. He offers an explanation on how Wood was

able to procure his Patent when "all the Nobility and Gentry here could not obtain the same Favour." The reasons, he states, are "very Plain":

We are at a great Distance from the King's Court, and have no body there to solicit for us, although a great Number of Lords and Squires, whose Estates are here, and are our Countrymen, spend all their Lives and Fortunes there (p. 5).

Distance, therefore, is an obvious disadvantage to the Irish; but, he implies, it should not be such. After all, the nobility and landed gentry of Ireland, who should be looking after the interests of their country, are constantly present at the Court. Thus, the Drapier clearly, but not directly, lays much of the blame for Wood's Patent at the door of the absentees, who already were responsible through neglect for so many of Ireland's evils.

Having shown why Ireland could not get the Patent, the Drapier tells why Wood was able to get it. For one thing, "he is an ENGLISH MAN." Never, does the Drapier allow his reader to forget the vital fact that a great gulf separates the English and the Irish, that the English are privileged under this discriminatory system, and, by implication, that it should not be so. Next, the Drapier comes to the heart of the matter in which he cleverly indicts King George, the Duchess of Kendal, and Sir Robert Walpole.

But this same Mr. WOODS was able to attend constantly for his own Interest; he is an ENGLISH MAN and had GREAT FRIENDS; and it seems knew very well where to give Money, to those that would speak to OTHERS that could speak to the KING and could tell

A FAIR STORY. And HIS MAJESTY, and perhaps the great Lord or Lords who advised him, might think it was for our Country's Good; and so, as the Lawyers express it, the KING was deceived in his Grant, which often happens in all Reigns (pp. 5-6).

The story of Wood's bribe to the Duchess of Kendal was so well-known by this time that the Drapier needed only such an insinuation to bring the incident to the mind of every reader. On the other hand, a direct assertion of Wood's bribe to the Duchess of Kendal would have not only been indelicate--although delicacy was never Swift's most prominent characteristic--but it would have exposed the pamphlet to official censure.

The Drapier's assault of King George in this passage is implied everywhere, but stated nowhere. Simply by reminding his readers of the illicit relationship between the King and the Duchess of Kendal, the Drapier exposes one of the King's most vulnerable weaknesses. Also, the inference that one of his mistresses could influence his decisions on the administration of one of his realms casts grave aspersions on the King's competence as an administrator. Furthermore, the idea that the "Country's Good" could easily be misrepresented to the King suggests strongly that the King does not know what is good for his Irish Kingdom nor does he care enough to find out what really is good for it. Nevertheless, the Drapier ostensibly represents King George as a benevolent monarch who has been deceived by wicked advisors and profiteers. This image of the King is extended in the next



sentence when the Drapier states,

And I am sure if his MAJESTY knew that such a Patent, if it should take Effect according to the Desire of Mr. WOODS, would utterly Ruin this Kingdom, which hath given such great Proofs of it's [sic] Loyalty, he would immediately recall it, and perhaps shew his Displeasure to SOME BODY OR OTHER, But a Word to the Wise is enough (p. 6).

Now, however, the benevolent monarch has been undeceived by the humble Drapier who has informed him of the true situation. And, if by chance this enlightening pamphlet did not come to the attention of the King, there were always the Addresses sent to the King from both Houses of Parliament six months earlier on which he had not yet taken decisive action. Every reader of this Letter was aware of these Addresses and of the King's failure to act upon them.

The Drapier unequivocally accepts the King's desire to do good for Ireland, and in this fact the irony of this statement becomes evident. Martin Price has said,

In order to be read at all, irony must be read critically; the reader must supply the good sense that the speaker lacks. . . .<sup>7</sup>

The reader only needs to supply the well-known fact that the King has known about the potential danger of Wood's Patent for six months, and immediately it becomes evident that King George must not really be interested in the "Country's Good." Furthermore, the reader will recognize at once that "a Word to the Wise" is not enough. Or, for the sake of those more

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<sup>7</sup>Martin Price, Swift's Rhetorical Art (New Haven, 1953), p. 67.

discerning readers and for those who had read "A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture," a logical conclusion would be that the King was not wise. At any rate, the Drapier plays the part of the loyal supporter of the King, but his argument disparages and undermines the character, the integrity, and the intelligence of the King. The Drapier overtly associates the King's best intentions with the cause of Ireland and thereby makes him a party to the opposition against Wood's coin. On the other hand, covertly, the Drapier exposes George I as a selfish, inconsiderate, apathetic, and ignorant ruler. Yet, the Drapier does not make this attack strictly on personal grounds. Beneath the complex exterior of this passage lurks an idea which slowly and persistently evolves into the major underlying theme of The Drapier's Letters--the concept of Irish independence and liberty.

As pleasant and as ultimately important as these flourishes are, they also help put the reader in a totally anti-English frame of mind. The primary objective of this Letter is to mold public opinion into a solid mass of resistance against Wood's Patent and its English proponents. By agitating the public's latent or kinetic antipathy to England and the English government, the Drapier is only making this task easier. Nevertheless, he must return to the immediate problem of discrediting Wood's halfpence and of pointing out to the Irish people their legal right to refuse it. The rest

of the first Letter essentially is devoted to these two specific duties. Yet, he employs two entirely different methods in presenting his argument on each of these points. He discredits Wood and his coin by the use of harsh invective and thunderous exaggeration, whereas he emphasizes the legality of refusing the coin by a highly factual and historically precise line of reasoning. One of the greatest testimonies to the power of the inconsistency of genius exists in the manner with which these two opposite methods complement each other.

Perhaps the greatest single factor that determines the success of the Drapier's exaggeration is his ability to manipulate mathematical figures with flourishing precision. He begins with the tiniest detail and arrives with unerring logic at the most gigantic conclusions. In effect, he leads his reader from Lilliput to Brobdingnag in the course of a few short paragraphs. Thus, he calmly informs his readers,

The common weight of these HALF-PENCE are between Four and Five to an Ounce, suppose Five, then three Shillings and Four Pence will weigh a Pound, and consequently Twenty Shillings will weigh Six Pound Butter Weight (p. 7).

In itself, this minor calculation seems precise, but relatively insignificant. Suddenly, however, he makes a natural and seemingly moderate transition from "Twenty Shillings" to "Two Hundred Pound." Twenty to two hundred does not appear to be an overly ambitious step for the Drapier; yet a bit of quick multiplication by the reader in translating two hundred

pounds into four thousand shillings makes the scale more impressive. Thus he continues,

Now there are many Hundred Farmers who pay Two Hundred Pound a Year Rent. Therefore when one of these Farmers comes with his Half Years Rent, which is one Hundred Pound, it will be at least Six Hundred Pound weight, which is three Horse Load (pp. 7-8).

Thus, by using simple multiplication of seemingly abstract figures and by transposing these figures into understandable working terms, the Drapier has brought the reader quickly from a discussion of ounces and shillings to a discussion of horse loads and annual rents.

Still the Drapier does not believe his point has been fully stated. Nor does he omit the opportunity to have some fun with one of his political adversaries, Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, William Conolly, reputed to be the richest man in Ireland.<sup>8</sup> He declares,

They say 'SQUIRE C-----Y has Sixteen Thousand Pounds a Year, now if he sends for his Rent to Town, as it is likely he does, he must have Two Hundred and Forty Horses to bring up his Half Years Rent, and Two or Three great Cellars in his House for Storage (p. 8).

Before the Drapier has finished with his calculations, he pictures the local banker hauling his ready cash upon the backs of twelve hundred horses. Here, then, is the Drapier's exaggeration; yet, his figures are mathematically sound and precise. Wherein lies the exaggeration? As the Drapier,

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<sup>8</sup>Craik, p. 349.

Swift employs the same tactics he uses so effectively in describing the worlds of Lilliput and Brobdingnag in Gulliver's Travels. His mathematical precision in creating his scale of values is impeccable. Thus, the reader adapts to the scale readily and willingly. The absurdity, and therein the exaggeration, lies in his creation of the situation. It is as absurd to imagine Squire Conolly hauling his half year's rent on two hundred and forty horses as it is to imagine a full-grown Englishman being stuffed into the hollow of a ham-bone by a malicious dwarf thirty feet tall.

The situation depicted by the Drapier could exist only if Wood's coin were the only exchange current in the realm, and this, assuredly, was not the case. His argument momentarily overwhelms the reader, but shortly the reader will recall the true situation, and then the Drapier's preposterous calculations will disintegrate. The Drapier, however, recognizes this fact, so he turns on the full intensity of his wrath to point out that his basic premise is fundamentally sound. In fact, he demonstrates boldly that the probability of Wood's coin becoming the only medium of exchange in the realm is virtually inescapable once it is accepted in the marketplace. He commences this assault by turning his previous allusion to counterfeiting into a positive assertion of fact:

These HALF-PENCE, if they once pass, will soon be COUNTERFEIT, because it may be cheaply done, the

STUFF is so Base. The DUTCH likewise will probably do the same thing, and send them over to us to pay for our Goods. And Mr. WOODS will never be at rest but coin on: So that in some years we shall have at least five Times Four Score and Ten Thousand Pounds of this Lumber. Now the Current Money of this Kingdom is not reckoned to be above Four Hundred Thousand Pounds in all, and while there is a Silver Sixpence left these BLOOD-SUCKERS will never be quiet (p. 9).

The reference to the Dutch in this passage is most interesting because it reveals Swift momentarily doffing the mask of the Drapier and giving vent to one of his most violent and bitter personal prejudices. Nonetheless, his point is clear. It may be an exaggeration to accuse the Dutch of sending shiploads of counterfeit coin to purchase Irish merchandise; but it is quite possible that every merchant and shopkeeper would be plagued with counterfeit coin offered by virtually every customer coming into their shops. Furthermore, the knowledge that there were no safeguards that limited the amount of coin that Wood could mint or send over to Ireland was widespread. Thus, the Drapier does not even include here the condition that Wood could send his coin into Ireland by stealth as he stated earlier in the Letter. Rather, he now makes no distinction between Wood and the counterfeiters, and he plainly forecasts the inevitable disastrous result of admitting Wood's coin. This complete identification between Wood and the counterfeiters receives explosive articulation in the Drapier's abashing prediction,

And while there is a Silver Sixpence left these BLOOD-SUCKERS will never be quiet.

Having worked his readers into a state of excited antagonism to Wood and his coin, the Drapier must now inform them thoroughly of their legal right to refuse Wood's coin. He advises his readers calmly,

But your Great Comfort is, that as his MAJESTIES Patent does not oblige you to take this Money, so the Laws have not given the Crown a Power of forcing the Subjects to take what Money the KING pleases (p. 10).

Thus, he asserts the two major legal sanctions open to the people by which they can express their opposition to Wood's coin. Before he recites the various statutes and judicial precedents that pertain to the subject of patents and coin, however, the Drapier takes a parting stab at King George. He continues,

For then by the same Reason we might be bound to take PEBBLE-STONES or Cockle-shells, or Stamped Leather for Current Coin, if ever we should happen to live under an ill PRINCE, who might likewise by the same Power make a Guinea pass for Ten Pounds, a Shilling for Twenty Shillings, and so on . . . (p. 10).

The Drapier has already stated that a merchant must ask ten times the value for his merchandise if it is to be paid for in Wood's coin. By such calculation, the King's granting of the Patent to Wood is very nearly equivalent to making "a Guinea pass for Ten Pounds." The logical conclusion to draw from the Drapier's hypothesis, therefore, is that George I is "an ill PRINCE."

The Drapier's introductory comments to his recitation of the laws and precedents tells a great deal about his

character. He states,

Having said thus much, I will go on to tell you the Judgments of some great Lawyers in this Matter, whom I fee'd on purpose for your Sakes, and got their Opinions under their Hands, that I might be sure I went upon good Grounds (pp. 10-11).

The Drapier does not overstep the limits of his trade and education. He is a shopkeeper who must keep his own accounts. Therefore arithmetical calculation--even in transposing ounces into horse loads--lies within his province. Likewise, as a shopkeeper, he has a natural interest in seeing that the coin of the realm maintains a standard intrinsic value. As an Irish citizen and tradesman he is entitled to be angry and disturbed when the monetary security of his country is threatened. On each of these matters the Drapier can and does speak with his own authority. Rather than represent the Drapier as a student of the law, Swift keeps the Drapier's character consistent as a humble, honest, patriotic, and distressed shopkeeper, whose greatest concern is to present the facts of a notorious affair to the people of Ireland. Therefore, when the Drapier does not have the necessary facts at hand, he seeks them with the proper authorities. Such behavior attests his integrity as a reporter and adds further authority to previous facts that he has cited.

The Drapier quotes many laws and authorities carefully and skillfully in order to make his point. First, he defines the terms of lawful and unlawful money. He states,

By the Law of England, the several Metals are divided into Lawful or true Metal and unlawful or false Metal,



the Former comprehends Silver or Gold; the Latter all Baser Metals: That the Former is only to pass in Payments appears by an Act of Parliament . . . (p. 11).

He goes on to quote another law which

Shews that by the Word Half-penny and Farthing of Lawful Money in that Statute concerning the Passing of Pence, are meant a small Coin in Half-pence and Farthings of Silver (p. 12).

Thus, he establishes by proper authority that according to law, copper coin is not lawful money.

With this legal power behind him, the Drapier presses his advantage. He tells his readers bluntly,

I will now, my Dear Friends to save you the Trouble, set before you in short, what the Law obliges you to do, and what it does not (Swift's italics) oblige you to (p. 12).

Actually, his use of the word "oblige" here and in the instructions that follow imposes a specific attitude in the minds of his readers, for it naturally conveys a sense of duty. Moreover, by asserting first a positive obligation to which the people are held by law, the Drapier gives an added weight of obligation to his negative statement. Thus, he tells his readers that they are obliged to accept coin of gold and silver; such is the law with which they must comply. When he tells them that they are "not obliged to take any Money which is not of Gold or Silver" (pp. 13-14), he implies that such is the law with which they should comply. Finally he adds,

Thirdly, much less are you obliged to take those Vile Half-Pence of that same WOODS, by which you must lose almost Eleven-Pence in every Shilling (p. 14).

In this statement, he combines his legal, economic, and emotional arguments against Wood's halfpence. To this advice, he joins an assuring and emphatic plea, which in essence contains the message of the entire Letter:

Therefore my Friends, stand to it One and All,  
refuse this Filthy Trash; . . . the Laws have not  
left it in the KING'S Power, to force us to take  
any Coin but what is Lawful, of right Standard  
Gold and Silver, therefore you have nothing to  
fear (p. 14).

#### IV

Shortly after the first Drapier's Letter reached the public, Walpole ordered an investigation of the entire affair. The English Privy Council then requested the Duke of Grafton to send papers and witnesses to support the Irish allegations against the Patent. Grafton was unable, however, to produce the papers and witnesses, thus convincing the Privy Council of his incompetence in handling the situation; for it seemed inconceivable and extraordinary to the English Privy Council that the Irish would refuse the opportunity to testify directly to the Privy Council on a matter which created such a turbulence in Dublin. Accordingly, Grafton received official notice on April 9, 1724, that Lord Carteret would relieve him of his duties as Lord Lieutenant.

Although the English Privy Council's amazement seems justified at the failure of the Irish to send papers and witnesses to support their claims against the Patent, good cause existed for the inaction of the Irish leaders at this time. Ferguson points out that the Irish Parliament was not in session when the request arrived; therefore they could not appoint official witnesses nor select specific documents for the hearings. The seriousness of the situation likewise dampened the willingness of anyone to go as an unofficial witness. Moreover, Ferguson avers, the absence of anyone representing Ireland's interest at the hearing detracted from

the import of its findings. Finally, the refusal to send papers and witnesses to the hearing showed the beginning of a policy of non-cooperation by the Irish leaders, a policy soon to be adopted with great success by the entire Irish people.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the event which determined most positively the course of succeeding events in the affair of Wood's halfpence occurred on April 27, when the "Report of the Assay" was submitted by Sir Isaac Newton to the Lords Commissioners in England. The essential conclusion of the "Report of the Assay" thoroughly vindicated Wood's coin and even declared it to be of better quality than the coin currently circulating in Ireland. The "Report" states,

By the assays we reckon the copper of Mr. Wood's half-pence and farthings to be of the same goodness and value with the copper of which the copper money is coined in the King's Mint for England; or worth in the market about twelve or thirteen pence per pound weight avoirdupois; and the copper of which the half-pence were coined for Ireland in the reigns of King Charles, King James, and King William, to be much inferior in value, the mixture being unknown, and not bearing the fire for converting it to any other use until it be refined.<sup>2</sup>

This statement leaves no doubt that Ireland sorely needed new copper coin. This fact, however, was readily admitted

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<sup>1</sup>Ferguson, pp. 90-91. The Drapier perhaps offers the best explanation for this situation when he declares that the addresses of the Irish Parliament and Privy Council should suffice (Davis, p. 26).

<sup>2</sup>"Report of the Assay on Wood's Coinage, Made by Sir Isaac Newton, Edward Southwell, Esq., and Thomas Scroope, Esq." Quoted in Temple Scott, Appendix II, pp. 210-211.

by all Irish leaders including the Drapier. The major significance of the "Report," however, consisted in the manner in which it thoroughly crushed the credibility of the facts on which the Drapier had based his entire argument in the first Letter. Newton's "Report" effectively proved to the satisfaction of the English that the fears of the Irish leaders were founded on the frail fabrications of a group of seditious agitators. On the other hand, the Drapier was not to be daunted by so sudden a turn of events. After all, the Privy Council had not yet received the full report from the Committee of Inquiry whom they had appointed to investigate the affair. On this report, rather than the "Report of the Assay," the Privy Council would undoubtedly form a plan of action.

In the meantime, the Lords Justices of Ireland and the Irish Privy Council forwarded Addresses to Lord Carteret requesting that no one be allowed to issue or utter Wood's coin until the affair was settled. Carteret took no action on these proposals. Nor was Wood inactive during the period that followed the "Report of the Assay." Wood suggested to the Committee of Inquiry that the £17,000 worth of coin he had already minted be given currency immediately, that he be permitted to mint up to £40,000 in coin under the same privilege, and that he would mint no more coin until Ireland showed further need for it.<sup>3</sup> This proposal appealed to the

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<sup>3</sup>Davis, p. xxxi.

Committee, and it was embodied in the final report to the Privy Council. This Report was submitted to the Privy Council on July 24, 1724, and in addition to suggesting that the coinage be limited to £40,000 for the present time, the Report proposed that all directives hindering the issue of Wood's coin be revoked and that the coinage be given currency with majestic instancy. For the moment, Wood had won the day, since few people doubted that the Privy Council would accept the Committee's Report in its entirety.

On August 1, the Drapier's printer, John Harding published in the Dublin News Letter a notice of the Report of the Committee of Inquiry. Swift must have seen immediately the inevitable consequences of this Report which would soon come to Dublin in the form of an order from the English Privy Council. Thus, he brought the Drapier back to public life, and on August 6--the very day on which the Privy Council officially accepted the Report--"A Letter to Mr. Harding the Printer, Upon Occasion of a Paragraph in His News-Paper of August 1st Relating to Mr. Wood's Half-Pence" by M. B., Drapier, appeared in the streets of Dublin.

The second Drapier's Letter, ostensibly addressed to Mr. Harding, was manifestly directed to everyone in Ireland, and to make this point clear, near the end of the Letter, the Drapier admits,

Though my Letter be Directed to you, Mr. Harding,  
yet I intend it for all my Countrymen (p. 28).

The purpose of the Letter, which the Drapier states in his opening paragraph,

That the Danger of our Ruin approaches nearer, and therefore the Kingdom requires NEW and FRESH WARNING (p. 19),

strongly implies that the choice of addressee is more rhetorical than actual. By choosing to address the Letter to the printer of Wood's paragraph, the Drapier more effectively concentrates the reader's attention on Wood's impudence and arrogance in entering the public lists to defend the Patent.

The method used by the Drapier in the second Letter is considerably less complex than that of the first Letter. His basic approach in the second Letter consists of a point by point analysis and refutation of Wood's paragraph that appeared in Harding's newspaper. Yet, whereas the form adheres to logic, the content strikes the emotions. In performing this task, the Drapier unleashes a furious and unrestrained personal assault on Wood; and, in order to lend his "NEW and FRESH WARNING" sufficient authority, he reiterates the people's legal rights to refuse Wood's coin. The countless side issues and innuendoes of the first Letter are for the most part absent from the second Letter although the Drapier includes a few pertinent comments on the theme of Irish liberty and independence, and he continues to emphasize the difference between the rights and privileges of English citizens and those of Irish citizens. Nevertheless,

the principal intention of the second Letter aims to dispel the people's fears of a Royal Proclamation and to reunite the efforts of the people against Wood's coin.

In the first paragraph of the second Letter, the Drapier labels Wood,

this Publick Enemy of ours, not satisfied to Ruin us with his Trash, [but who] takes every Occasion to treat this Kingdom with the utmost Contempt (p. 19).

This statement reflects the indignation and anger of the Drapier and sets the tone for the rest of the Letter. Likewise, it is designed to grate against the reader's sense of national pride. But, the Drapier keeps his preliminary remarks to a minimum, and he comes directly to the matter at hand. Accordingly, he refers to Wood's statement which declares,

Several of our Merchants and Traders upon Examination before a Committee of a Council, [agree] that there was the utmost Necessity of Copper-Money here . . . (p. 19).

The Drapier willingly admits a shortage of copper coin in Ireland; thus he cannot assail the verity of this statement. Therefore, he combines the devices of analogy and the rhetorical question to discredit Wood and his Patent. He asks angrily,

What then? If a Physician prescribes to a Patient a Dram of Physick, shall a Rascal Apothecary Gram him with a Pound, and mix it up with Poyson (p. 19)?

Not only does Wood's Patent permit him to coin far too much money for Ireland's needs, but the base materials in Wood's



alloy contaminate the coin so badly that the ultimate achievement of Wood's Patent will be the destruction of Ireland's economy. The Drapier expresses this idea even more bluntly when he chooses another medical analogy to make his point. In this case, he frankly accuses Wood and his confederates of creating the shortage in copper coin by buying up the halfpence previously in circulation. To remove this lack of copper coin, the Drapier contends fiercely,

by Mr. Woods his Remedy, would be, to Cure a  
Scratch on the Finger by Cutting off the Arm  
(p. 20).

The Drapier still retains his ability to exaggerate in order to make his point. Yet he goes on to calculate that Wood's Patent allows him to mint over four times the maximum sum of copper coin needed by Ireland. In the light of such findings, the Drapier's exaggeration does not seem out of order.

The Drapier comes next to a comment on Newton's assay of Wood's coin. He repeats the remark from the "Report of the Assay" which states,

Wood had in all Respects performed his Contract  
(p. 21).

The Drapier can no longer contain his fury, and the theme of Irish liberty and independence rings clearly beneath the resounding crescendo of his wrath. "His Contract!", he repeats ferociously,

With whom? Was it with the Parliament or People of Ireland? Are not they to be the Purchasers (p. 21)?

Nor does the Drapier's fury permit these questions to remain strictly rhetorical. His anger has gained control of him for the moment, and he furnishes to the reader in no uncertain terms the appropriate response to these questions.

But they Detest, Abhor, and Reject it, as Corrupt, Fraudulent, mingled with Dirt and Trash (p. 21).

If anyone in Ireland had any uncertainty as to how he should react to Wood's Patent, the Drapier had now removed the doubt.

In dealing directly with the actual results of the assay, the Drapier diminishes his tone and confidently exposes the deceitful way in which the assay was conducted.

Woods takes care to Coyn a Dozen or Two Halfpence of good Metal, sends them to the Tower and they are approved, and these must answer all that he already Coyned or shall Coyn for the Future (p. 21).

Rather than express his anger over such fraudulent practice, the Drapier can only marvel at the ignorance of those who expect the Irish to accept Wood's coin on the basis of the assay. He wants to depict such persons more as fools than as knaves. Certainly enough has already been said to expose them as cheaters and scoundrels, and much more is yet to be said on that score. Therefore, he resorts again to an apt analogy, which implies the feeble-mindedness of those who expect the Irish to put faith in Newton's assay, the credit for which he now cleverly transfers to Wood.

I have heard of a Man who had a Mind to sell his House, and therefore carried a Piece of Brick in his Pocket, which he shewed as a Pattern to encourage Purchase; and this is directly the Case in Point with Mr. Wood's ASSAY (pp. 21-22).

The next part of Wood's paragraph that the Drapier attacks concerns the proposal that was included in the Report of the Committee of Inquiry, which stated that Wood would mint no more than £40,000 in coin,

unless the EXIGENCIES OF TRADE REQUIRE IT (p. 22).

Here, the Drapier faces the issue squarely and refuses to let his readers be compromised into accepting Wood's terms. Therefore, he first reminds them that the law does not oblige them to accept copper coin. Even in this Letter, which depends so heavily on invective and emotion, the Drapier realizes that he must never allow his readers to forget that they are acting legally by refusing Wood's coin. Secondly, he points out that even £40,000 is almost double the amount of copper coin required by Ireland even if none of the present copper coin were to remain. For his major point, in which he again emphasizes the deceitful character of Wood, the Drapier analyzes the actual language of Wood's statement. Once more, the question serves his purpose in commenting on Wood's remark, and in this case, the Drapier supplies his own direct answer to the question.

Again I ask, who is to be Judge when the EXIGENCIES OF TRADE REQUIRE IT? Without Doubt he means himself, . . . and he will Judge our EXIGENCIES by his own; neither will these ever be at an End till he and his Accomplices will think they have enough (pp. 22-23).

The clever insights and subtle twistings of the Drapier's logic give Wood no quarter, and he plays with Wood's words to his own advantage as freely as if he had composed them himself for this specific purpose.

The Drapier has so far only been sharpening his sword on his teeth, and only now does he bare his fangs and wield his two-edged sword in a fierce assault on the hopelessly helpless Wood. This charge is directed specifically toward Wood's condescending offer to take Irish manufacture for his coin in order to avoid draining the country of its gold and silver and to oblige no one to receive more than five pence half-penny in any one transaction. Never is the Drapier more vindictive and outraged as he slowly increases the frequency and severity of the cutting blows on the defenseless Wood. Moreover, in this hail of sharp steel, the Drapier exhibits his consummate skill as a swordsman by managing to chop up a dreaded opponent who was present at the fray only by spiritual association. King George becomes a victim of the Drapier's wrath by means of the Drapier's clever choice of words in assigning epithets and attributing actions to Wood. Thus, while fury and anger dominate the Drapier's language in the next passage, his ability to identify Wood with King George demonstrates the controlled and skilled achievement of the Drapier's craftsmanship.

The Drapier commands his reader's attention by the use of a verbal imperative.

First, Observe this little Impudent Hardware Man  
 . . . daring to prescribe what no King of England  
 ever attempted, how far a whole Nation shall be  
 obliged to take his Brass Coyn (pp. 23-24).

Here the Drapier is very careful to name the King of England specifically and to omit any reference to him as the King of Ireland. Such a choice of language maintains a sharp distinction between England and Ireland and implies clearly that the imposition of Wood's halfpence on Ireland exceeds all previous impositions on Ireland by the Kings of England. The Drapier makes his allusions more pointed as his irony reaches its greatest intensity.

For sure there was never an Example in History, of a great Kingdom kept in Awe for above a Year in daily Dread of utter Destruction, not by a powerful Invader at the Head of Twenty thousand Men, not by a Plague or a Famine, not by a Tyrannical Prince (for we never had one more Gracious) or a corrupt Administration, but by one single, diminutive, insignificant, Mechanick (p. 24).

The Drapier's clever parenthetical comment destroys the hypothetical appearance of this list by bringing to the reader's attention the possibility of confusing these comparisons with the situation actually existing between England and Ireland. The effectiveness of this irony is enhanced, moreover, by a sarcastic denunciation of Wood in the next paragraph. The Drapier exclaims angrily,

This little Arbitrary Mock-Monarch most Graciously offers to take our Manufactures in Exchange (p. 24).

Now the Drapier's identification of Wood with King George becomes nearly complete. This identification is achieved by the reference to Wood as a "Mock-Monarch," but it receives

force and direction from the repetition of the word "Graciously" which echoes the previous ironical allusion to King George.

In bringing his argument to its climax, the Drapier reverts to his emphatic advocacy of the law. He has shown how Wood dares to do what Kings have never done, and he has related Wood so closely to King George by clever inference that he has linked the cause of Wood's halfpence as tightly to King George as to Wood. Therefore, in reiterating the legal facts of the matter, the Drapier not only states Wood's legal limitations, but he also clarifies once more the King's legal limitations. Any conscious intention of exceeding these limitations must be recognized for what it is. Thus, the Drapier continues,

His Proposals Conclude with perfect High Treason. He promises, that no Person shall be OBLIGED to receive more than Five-pence Half-penny of his Coyn in one Payment; By which it is plain, that he pretends to OBLIGE every Subject in this Kingdom to take so much in every Payment, if it be offered; whereas his Patent Obliges no Man, nor can the Prerogative by Law claim such a Power, as I have often observed (p. 24).

Once more the sharp insight of the Drapier and his adroit manipulation of Wood's words turn a seemingly innocent and moderate proposal into an act of treason.

This victory of logic does not suffice for the Drapier, and his anger once more comes to the fore. At this point the rhetorical question serves the Drapier nobly in denouncing clandestinely King George, the Duchess of Kendal,

and Robert Walpole. "Good God!", he exclaims furiously,

Who are this Wretch's Advisers? Who are his Supporters, Abettors, Encouragers, or Sharers?

Now the Drapier asserts his individuality and his personal independence as a citizen and as a shopkeeper in declaring his determination to resist Wood's coin at all risks. The examples he chooses to employ are perhaps too exaggerated or too extreme; nevertheless, he wants to emphasize to the people of Ireland and to the shopkeepers and merchants the danger to their liberty, security, and economy. The Drapier sets himself up in single opposition to Wood in order to show the people of Ireland the course they must follow in order to preserve and defend their liberty. His exaggerated and over-exuberant language, therefore, is calculated to warn the citizens of Ireland of the gravity of the situation. He declares,

Mr. Woods will OBLIGE me to take Five-pence Half-penny of his Brass in every Payment. And I will Shoot Mr. Woods and his Deputies through the Head, like High-way Men or House-breakers, IF they dare to force one Farthing of their Coyn upon me in the Payment of an Hundred Pounds. It is no Loss of Honour to submit to the Lyon, but who, with the Figure of a Man, can think with Patience of being Devoured alive by a Rat (p. 25).

The Drapier seems to be insinuating open rebellion, but the example he uses here illuminates his true intention. He does advocate rebellion, but only against Wood and his half-pence. Many Irishmen were still living who witnessed the fruitless Rebellion of 1689. Thus, Swift's choice of the

lion in his example illustrates his recognition of the futility of armed rebellion against the Crown. On the other hand, he suggests that rebellion against Wood--in this case, the rat--can be successful and must be undertaken.

The final paragraphs of this Letter contain arguments designed to bolster the courage of the people in their opposition to Wood's halfpence. The Drapier, for instance remarks,

I observe many of our People putting a Melancholly Case on this Subject (p. 27),

because of their fear that the King would issue a Proclamation commanding them to receive Wood's coin. So once more the Drapier reminds the people that the King

will not Issue out a Proclamation against Law, or if such a thing should happen by a Mistake, we are no more obliged to obey it than to run our Heads into the Fire (p. 27).

Furthermore, he makes a sarcastic condemnation of the absentee landlords by reminding his readers that the Irish landlords in England would never be content to receive their rents in Wood's debased coin, the implication being that they would intervene with the English government not so much to save the Irish people but to preserve their own standard of living. Nevertheless, the landlords' greed would act to promote the Irish cause, and for this reason the people should take heart.

Finally, the Drapier proposes that an advertisement be drawn up and signed by "Two or Three Hundred principal



Gentlemen of this Kingdom" which would outline the evils of Wood's Patent. Such an advertisement, the Drapier suggests, should be sent to all the tenants of these squires in order to

give the Alarm, and set the Kingdom on their Guard. This would give Courage to the meanest Tenant and Cottager (p. 31).

The Drapier includes a sample statement declaring what such an advertisement should say in case anyone decided to circulate petitions against Wood and his Patent. The Drapier realizes that one of the best possible means to form and retain universal opinion against Wood's coin is through consolidated efforts of influential persons and groups. Public declarations of unanimous rejection of Wood's coin will instill courage and determination in the minds of the entire populace. What he does not realize, however, is the tremendous proportions to which this modest proposal will grow during the next month.

The Drapier intended his second Letter primarily to strengthen resistance against Wood's coin and to reassure the Irish people of their constitutional right to refuse the halfpence. He realized, however, that his own arguments and pamphlets would not be enough to rally the entire nation to the cause. For this reason, he offered his suggestion to the landed men at the end of the second Letter to issue an advertisement or declaration against Wood. Such a show of unity and strength by the aristocracy would serve as an example to the lower classes and as a warning to the English. For the present, however, his suggestion was not heeded by the landed men, but it did, perhaps, have no small influence in bringing forth the countless proclamations that were published against Wood's coin during August and September. On August 15, a group of Dublin bankers published a statement that they would not accept Wood's coin in their banks. Then, on August 20 the Grand Juries of the City and County of Dublin issued a declaration against Wood's Patent. Two days later, the Holy Trinity Merchant's Guild printed a declaration against Wood's coin.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in September some clever soul, probably prompted by the Drapier's comment at the end of his first Letter that even the beggars would

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<sup>1</sup>Ferguson, pp. 107-111.

be undone if Wood's coin were to become current, printed "A Declaration of the Beggars, Lame and Blind, Halt and Maimed, both Male and Female, in and about the City of Dublin, with all their Children Legitimate and Merrybegotten" in which the supposed beggars requested the citizens of Dublin not to give them alms in Wood's coin.

The appearance of the many proclamations doubtless aided in building public opinion into a solid wall of resistance against Wood's coin. Nevertheless, the aristocracy still had not made a public declaration against Wood's Patent. Swift was waiting for an excuse to point out to the aristocracy their responsibility and duty to lead the country in the struggle against Wood's halfpence. Then, on August 14 the English Privy Council issued its final Report on the investigation into this matter, and it sent an order to the Lords Justices and Commissioners of Revenue in Dublin directing them "to accept and issue Wood's coin without hindrance."<sup>2</sup> Events were quickly coming to a head, and no one must falter now in his duty to resist Wood's coin. When an article on the Report appeared in Dublin on August 18, the Drapier took the opportunity to write "Some Observations upon a Paper, Call'd The Report of the Committee of the Most Honourable the Privy-Council in England, Relating to Wood's Half-pence." He addressed this Letter

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<sup>2</sup>Ferguson, p. 107.

to the "NOBILITY and GENTRY of the Kingdom of IRELAND." By so addressing this Letter, the Drapier could explicitly advise the aristocracy of its obligation to the nation while at the same time he could reiterate basic objections to Wood's Patent and reaffirm the constitutional guarantees protecting Ireland from it.

Because this Letter is addressed to the "NOBILITY and GENTRY" of Ireland, the Drapier relies more on the power of reason and less on the force of emotion than he did in the second Letter. As a matter of fact, the tone of the third Letter is moderate and subdued, and the fiery anger that dominated the second Letter gives way to a more sophisticated method of argument. Fundamentally, the formal approach to the second and third Letters remains consistent. In each Letter the Drapier bases his argument on a newspaper article that supports Wood's Patent, and he proceeds by a careful analysis of the language of the article. Many of the actual statements on which the Drapier bases his argument are the same in both Letters; for, essentially, both articles were taken from material submitted by the Committee of Inquiry to the Privy Council. In the third Letter, however, the Drapier depends on historical and current fact and the weight of reason and logic in order to enunciate his views.

One of the first ideas that the Drapier advances in the third Letter is that the article to which he objects was written or published by William Wood. He made the same

claim in reference to the article he attacked in the second Letter. Such a maneuver immediately discredits the article and antagonizes the reader to the contents of the article. The Drapier does not really need this additional help to discredit the article, but his method is so thorough that he does not permit any opportunity to condition his reader's attitudes to pass him by. Thus, he reminds the nobility and gentry of Wood's rudeness in printing such an article before the official Report had been sent to the Irish government. Nevertheless, the Drapier passes quickly over this aspect of the article without becoming involved in an emotional harangue against Wood, for in accepting the authenticity of the article, he automatically identifies Wood with the Privy Council. He accepts the word of the article that the Report has been issued, but he immediately offers a legal denial of the Report's validity. In this statement, the Drapier demonstrates his humility, his determination, and his perspicuity, and the reader sees at once that the Drapier in this Letter is not the emotional and impulsive tradesman of the previous Letter. He declares,

But with all Deference be it spoken, I do not conceive that a Report of a Committee of the Council in England is Hitherto a Law in either Kingdom; and until any Point is determined to be a LAW, it remains disputable by every Subject (p. 36).

Here the Drapier returns to two of his favorite points of emphasis: the right of the subject to obey only what is law and the distinction between the kingdoms of Ireland and England.

The deferential tone of the Drapier's statement continues in the next paragraph. Here he excuses his humble station in life and explains his motives in presuming to address the nobility and gentry of the nation. He confesses,

This (May it please your Lordships and Worships) may seem a strange way of discoursing in an Illiterate Shop-Keeper. I have endeavoured (although without the Help of Books) to improve that small Portion of Reason which GOD hath pleased to give me, and when Reason plainly appears before me, I cannot turn my Head from it (p. 36).

The Drapier establishes reason as the basis of his argument in this Letter, and his emphasis of his own duty to reason in spite of his lack of education sets a clear example before the nobles and squires of their obligation to heed reason and aid the nation.

The first point of issue that the Drapier raises against the newspaper article concerns the testimony of witnesses before the Committee of Inquiry who alleged Ireland's need for copper coin. In the second Letter, the Drapier simply referred to these men as

a few Betrayers of their Country, Confederates with Woods, from whom they are to purchase a great Quantity of his Coyn, perhaps at half Value, and Vend it among us to the Ruin of the Publick, and their own private Advantage (pp. 19-20).

In the third Letter, however, the Drapier realizes that his audience--the nobility and gentry--is not especially vulnerable to the persuasions of such vague slander and unfounded accusations. Therefore, in accordance with his concern for facts and reason, the Drapier names the witnesses

and gives an account of their personal backgrounds. One of them was "tryed for Robbing the Treasury in Ireland," and the "second was Tryed for a Rape" as well as being a known perjurer. Nor does the Drapier permit Wood to escape this airing of the facts, and he recalls that Wood,

having been a Collector in Shropshire, where pretending to have been Robbed, and Suing the County, he was Cast, and for the Infamy of the Fact, lost his Employment (p. 37).

As the Drapier continues his analysis of the newspaper article, his emphasis of the distinction between Ireland and England becomes more central to his theme. He by no means allows Wood to escape whipping, but he concentrates his principal arguments on exposing the differences in rights and privileges between the kingdoms of Ireland and England. Hence, the theme of Irish liberty and independence becomes the primary, underlying force of the third Letter. Doubtless, the news of the Privy Council's Report prompted the Drapier to develop this theme more fully than he had in the previous Letters, inasmuch as, Ferguson declares,

The publication of the Privy Council's Report has forced the patentee into the background. for now the English government is officially and overtly committed to imposing the halfpence on Ireland.<sup>3</sup>

The Drapier could no longer restrict the battle to a contest between himself and Wood; England had intervened, and now

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<sup>3</sup>Ferguson, p. 109.

Ireland must reveal her own sovereignty in order to meet the challenge.

With this idea in mind, the Drapier treats the objection stated in the article that

in a Matter which had raised so great a CLAMOUR in Ireland, No one Person could be prevailed upon to come over from Ireland in Support of the United Sense of both Houses of Parliament in Ireland (p. 38).

The Drapier had previously answered this objection in an outraged and indignant manner at the end of the second Letter. Now, however, his humility becomes overwhelming as he undertakes to answer it

by plain Reason, unassisted by Art, Cunning or Eloquence (p. 38).

The humble and subdued sarcasm of this statement continues in the next paragraph as the Drapier demonstrates the reason and logic which gives such weight to his arguments. He declares,

In my humble Opinion, the Committee of Council hath already prejudg'd the whole Case, by calling the United Sense of both Houses of Parliament in Ireland an UNIVERSAL CLAMOUR (p. 38).

Now the Drapier adds a little emotional fuel to his argument that is designed to awaken the national pride of the nobles and squires. He continues,

Here the Addresses of the Lords and Commons of Ireland against a Ruinous Destructive Project of an Obscure, Single Undertaker, is called a CLAMOUR (p. 38).

Next, the Drapier moderates his emotion and ingeniously



inverts the situation in order to dramatize by suggestion the differences between Ireland and England. He queries,

I desire to know how such a Stile would be Resented in England from a Committee of Council there to a Parliament, and how many Impeachments would follow upon it (pp. 38-39).

Before proceeding with his hypothetical argument, however, the Drapier decides to inject an important statement of historical and current fact relevant to Wood's Patent. He points out that in Knox's Patent,

Security was given into the Exchequer, that the Patentee should at any Time receive his Half-pence back, and pay Gold or Silver in Exchange for them (p. 39).

This condition, he adds, does not exist in Wood's Patent,

which Condition was worth a Hundred Times all other Limitations whatsoever.

With this pertinent information freshly stated, the Drapier parades a series of rhetorical questions before his readers in which he progresses unfalteringly to the crucial issue now facing the nobility and gentry as well as the entire population of Ireland: the problem of Ireland's subjugation to the government of England.

The Drapier commences this march to his declaration of Irish freedom by a seemingly innocent, but rhetorically clever supposition. "Put the Case," he suggests,

that the two houses of Lords and Commons of England, and the PRIVY COUNCIL there should Address his Majesty to recal a Patent, from whence they apprehend the most ruinous Consequences to the whole Kingdom: and to make it Stronger if possible, that the whole Nation, almost to a Man, should thereupon

Discover the most Dismal Apprehensions (as Mr. Wood styles them) would his Majesty debate half an Hour what he had to do (pp. 39-40)?

In this question the Drapier definitely places the burden of guilt squarely on King George. His next question strikes out boldly at Robert Walpole.

Would any Minister dare advise him against  
Recalling such a Patent?

These questions implicitly accuse the English government--specifically George I and Walpole--of behavior prejudicial to the interests of Ireland. But the Drapier has already made manifold allusions to the unfairness and selfishness of England's administration of the Irish kingdom. Today, he wants to make a bold and unequivocal statement distinguishing between the rights and privileges of Irish and English citizens. Irish freedom becomes the central issue as he continues the rhetorical question, and Wood's Patent does not even remain as a veil to disguise his call for Irish liberty and independence.

Were not the People of Ireland born as Free as those of England? How have they forfeited their Freedom? Is not their Parliament as fair a Representative of the People as that of England? And hath not their Privy Council as great or a greater Share in the Administration of Publick Affairs? Are they not Subjects of the same King? Does not the same Sun shine on them? And have they not the same God for their Protector? Am I a Free-Man in England, and do I become a Slave in six Hours by crossing the Channel (p. 40)?

The matter is now out in the open, and the Drapier henceforth uses Wood's Patent mainly as a pretense for his urgent

championing of Irish liberty. The slaves must recapture their lost rights and reassert their sovereign privileges as free men.

Although the Drapier has manifestly shifted the core of his argument to the theme of Irish liberty and independence, he continues to concentrate the bulk of his attack on Wood's Patent. Wood's halfpence remains the immediate evil, and he cannot let his readers forget this fact. Furthermore, Wood and his halfpence have gained a symbolic value in Ireland by virtue of the Drapier's association between Wood and the Crown, and between the halfpence and the yoke of tyranny. Therefore, defeat of Wood and his halfpence would now represent a great moral victory for the Irish. For this reason, The Drapier frequently combines his attacks on Wood with his assertions of Irish freedom. Wood and his coin come to represent the antithesis of Irish rights and liberty as in the following declaration:

Therefore whatever Justice a FREE PEOPLE can Claim  
we have at least an Equal Title to it with our  
Brethren in England, and whatever grace a good  
Prince can bestow on the most Loyal Subjects, we  
have Reason to expect it; Neither hath this  
Kingdom any way deserved to be Sacrificed to one  
Single, Rapacious, Obscure, Ignominious PROJECTOR  
(p. 45).

In this statement the Drapier speaks straightforwardly and plainly. His tone is angry and resentful as he renounces the projected sacrifice of Ireland for the enrichment of Wood. He does not pass over this point lightly, however,

and shortly he directs the full power of his irony toward exposing the illogicality and injustice of Wood's enrichment at the cost of Ireland's "utter undoing." Again, the rhetorical question provides the Drapier with his most penetrating weapon. "But he must be surely a Man of some wonderful merit," the Drapier declares sarcastically, after which he cleverly asks,

Hath he saved any other Kingdom at his own Expence,  
to give him a Title of Re-imbursing himself by the  
Destruction of ours (p. 46)?

The notion of Wood's coin destroying the Irish nation certainly is not new to the Drapier's argument at this point. But now the Drapier no longer refers to the proposed or possible destruction of Ireland. He accepts the destruction as inevitable as he connects it to the issue of rights and privileges. He has just stated that because of their loyalty the Irish citizens should not have their rights and privileges sacrificed to the profit of Wood. Now, he suggests that perhaps Wood's personal merit is so great that he deserves the privilege of rewarding himself at the expense of Ireland. The reader immediately recognizes the fallacy in such reasoning and swiftly perceives the preposterous nature of the suggestion that any man, much less Wood, is entitled to such a privilege. By the same token, the reader also knows that in fact Wood is enjoying such a privilege. Therefore, the immense difference between the rights and privileges of Irishmen and Englishmen, as represented by

Wood, becomes emphatically obvious to every reader.

Later in the third Letter the Drapier brings this issue to a climax. He raises the matter by quoting from the newspaper article:

Such Patents are in no Manner Derogatory or Invasive of any Liberty or Privilege of the King's Subjects of Ireland (p. 51).

Now, Wood's Patent falls from the scene as the Drapier concentrates his attention solely on the problem of Irish rights. He declares,

If this be in no Manner Derogatory nor Evasive of any Liberties or Privileges of the Subjects of Ireland, it ought to have been expressed what our Liberties and Privileges are, and whether we have any at all, for in Specifying the Word IRELAND, instead of saying His Majesty's Subjects, it would seem to insinuate that we are not upon the same Foot with our Fellow Subjects in England (p. 51).

The Drapier's ability to find vulnerable points in his opponents' statements never fails him, and his appeal for the prevalence of fact and reason always overcomes all other considerations. Thus, he rips open the seemingly innocent statement in the newspaper article simply by demanding the definitions of "Liberties and Privileges." These words and the connotations they bear require no explanation or clarification under normal circumstances; yet, the Drapier points out that the context in which these words appear subverts their usual meaning, at least in regard to the kingdom of Ireland. Therefore, by ostensibly criticizing "A Lapse of the Pen," which suggested a possible

misinterpretation of the words "Liberties and Privileges," the Drapier frankly and openly exposes the problem of Ireland's inferiority to England in terms of the rights and privileges enjoyed by their respective citizens. Nevertheless, the Drapier refuses to accept this position of inferiority as a matter of law even though he recognizes it as a matter of fact. Thus he asserts confidently,

Therefore whatever Liberties or Privileges the People of England enjoy by COMMON LAW, we of Ireland have the same (p. 51).

In the final analysis, the Drapier almost always reverts to the law and stresses obedience to it. Such a course of action clearly absolves his Letters of any charge of sedition by the opposition. Similarly, by emphasizing the legal sanctions open to the Irish people, he can more easily dispel popular fears of rejecting Wood's coin. In this last case, however, the Drapier wants to demonstrate to the nobles and squires, as well as to the entire populace, that the Irish do not enjoy the equality under the law that the law guarantees. By the same token, he realizes that by exerting their rights consciously and energetically, the Irish people would move closer toward the immediate goal of de facto equality and toward the ultimate goal of independence. The law actually is working for the Irish; they need only to use it to their advantage. Thus, the Drapier returns to Wood's Patent, but he stresses the law and liberty as he advises his readers to refuse Wood's coin. He puts the

problem in the simplest terms possible, and once more he chooses a pertinent and fitting example to illustrate his proposal.

But it is needless to argue any longer. The Matter is come to an Issue. His Majesty, Pursuant to the Law, hath left the Field open between Wood and the Kingdom of Ireland. Wood hath Liberty to Offer his Coyn, and We have Law, Reason, Liberty, and Necessity to refuse it. A knavish Jocky may Ride an old Foundred Jade about the Market, but none are obliged to buy it (p. 59).

Before concluding this Letter with another plea to the nobility and gentry to issue a public declaration against Wood's coin, the Drapier draws one of the most memorable analogies in all the Letters, and at the same time he reveals one of the major reasons that prompted him to write his Letters. He states,

When a House is attempted to be Robbed it often happens that the weakest in the Family runs first to stop the Door (p. 63).

The Drapier retains his humble tone as he suggests,

I was in the Case of David who could not move in the Armour of Saul, and therefore I rather chose to attack this Uncircumcised Philistine (Wood I mean) with a Sling and a Stone (p. 63).

His parenthetical remark would tend to draw the reader's attention to either George I or Robert Walpole because it suggests that Wood was not the obvious object of his analogy--or, for that matter, of his attack. But the Drapier is clearly having a little fun now as he develops his analogy.

And I may say for Wood's Honour as well as my own, that he Resembles Goliath in many Circumstances, very applicable to the present Purpose; for Goliath

had a Helmet of Brass upon his Head, and he was Armed with a Coat of Mail, and the weight of the Coat was Five Thousand Sheakles of Brass, and he had Greaves of Brass upon his Legs, and a Target of Brass between his Shoulders (p. 63).

Finally, the Drapier carries the analogy to its natural conclusion and adds a special condition which ridicules Wood beyond measure. At the same time, despite his increasingly emphatic urging of Irish liberty, the Drapier makes it perfectly clear that his immediate attention and concern remains directed against Wood and his halfpence.

Goliah's Conditions of Combat were likewise the same with those of Wood. If he prevail against us, then shall we be his Servants: But if it happens that I prevail over him, I Renounce the other part of the Condition, he shall never be a Servant of Mine, for I do not think him fit to be Trusted in any Honest Man's Shop (p. 63).

On this humorous note, the Drapier begs the nobles to issue their proclamation against Wood's coin and expresses hope that the dread of Wood's halfpence would soon be ended. Events, however, were not to permit such hope to succeed, and within the next two months the Drapier would find the necessity to speak out once more against Wood's halfpence and for the cause of Irish liberty.



## VI

In spite of Ireland's unanimity in renouncing and rejecting Wood's halfpence, the English government made no signs of conceding to the Irish requests. On the contrary, England acted to reinforce its weakened position in Ireland. On August 31, Hugh Boulter was appointed Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland. But even Boulter, a politically adept and excessively partisan Englishman, was unable to alter Irish opposition to Wood's coin. In fact, he frankly admitted that Wood's Patent permitted him to mint more money than was necessary for Ireland.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Boulter later recommended to the English Privy Council that Wood's Patent be revoked. This recommendation, however, was not inspired by any sense of justice or concern for the Irish, but by his recognition that the affair was uniting all parties and religions in Ireland against the English and that many people had taken advantage of the situation "to talk of independency."<sup>2</sup> His suggestion, therefore, seemed to be founded primarily on a policy of expedience for England. During the next two decades, Archbishop Boulter would oversee Irish affairs and promote the English interests

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<sup>1</sup>See above, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>A letter of January 19, 1725, from Boulter to the Duke of Newcastle. Quoted by Froude, I, 545-547.

in Ireland.<sup>3</sup>

Another move undertaken by the English to strengthen their hand in Ireland in the autumn of 1724 was the dispatch of Lord Carteret to Dublin, presumably to settle the affair of Wood's halfpence. The new Lord Lieutenant, according to custom, never came to Ireland until the scheduled opening of the Irish Parliament. The Parliament, however, was not to convene until March, 1725. When, in early October, rumors circulated throughout Dublin that Carteret was to arrive momentarily, the Irish leaders realized that the English government was absolutely determined to impose Wood's halfpence on Ireland. Moreover, a report appeared on October 10, in the Dublin Intelligence which quoted Robert Walpole as saying,

If the People of Ireland still persisted in their Refusal of the Brass Coin, he would make them swallow it in Fireballs!<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Craik, p. 336, points out that so bigoted were Boulter's opinions in the matter of Irish welfare that when a Bill for the benefit of Irish manufacture was rejected by the English Privy Council, he thanked the English Ministers candidly and with no intention of sarcasm "that the rejection was not based solely on disregard for Ireland, but also to some extent on the notion that rejection would benefit England.

<sup>4</sup>Davis, pp. xli. Near the end of the fourth Letter the Drapier thoroughly demolishes Walpole's statement by means of a most literal and purposefully naive analysis of the problems in administering "fireballs" to the whole population of Ireland and by his disbelieving speculation on the problems the people would encounter in swallowing the "fireballs," especially "considering the Squeamishness of some Stomachs and the Peevishness of Young Children (Davis,

Walpole's alleged public statement and Carteret's imminent arrival convinced the Drapier that once more he must bolster the Irish ramparts of resistance against Wood's halfpence.

Lord Carteret arrived in Dublin on October 22, 1724. Swift had prepared a short poem which ridicules Carteret's landing and which establishes the connection between his arrival and Wood's halfpence. While the purpose of this poem has serious implications, the tone remains light and the style humorous. To avoid any possible complications, therefore, Swift published the poem anonymously. He wrote:

Carteret was welcomed to the shore  
First with brazen cannon's roar;  
To meet him next the soldier comes,  
With brazen trumps and brazen drums;  
Approaching near the town he hears,  
The brazen bells salute his ears:  
But when Wood's brass began to sound,  
Guns, trumpets, drums, and bells, were drown'd.<sup>5</sup>

This relatively mild poem doubtless provided Carteret, a man of learning and understanding, an amusing moment amid the turmoil of his disembarkment. Swift also had prepared another literary endeavor for Carteret's arrival, which appealed in no way to the sense of humor of his old acquaintance. On October 21, "A Letter to the Whole People of

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p. 86). Such a passage represents Swift's ironic technique at its best; it is the literal-minded, unfeeling, analytic method, employing a dash of the macabre, which Swift later develops to such grand and striking proportions in "A Modest Proposal."

<sup>5</sup>F. Elrington Ball, Swift's Verse (London, 1929), pp. 185-186.

Ireland" by M. B., Drapier, appeared throughout the streets of Dublin. As soon as Carteret read this Letter on the next day, his rage was instantaneous, and his involvement in the affair of Wood's halfpence was complete.

Apparently there was no official report of Carteret's coming to Ireland, but the rumor was so well-founded that the Drapier could time the publication of his Letter for the most advantageous moment. Just as the majority of the people in Dublin finished reading the Letter, Carteret landed. This timing was important because the Drapier bases much of the irony in this Letter on the rumor of Carteret's coming. The fourth Letter was intended, ostensibly, to discredit the rumor of Carteret's premature trip to Dublin and to reassure the people of their constitutional and legal rights in the eventuality that the rumor was true. The Drapier, nevertheless, constructed his argument in such a way that Carteret's actual arrival supplied the vital fact to the reader which created the ironic element in his argument. More than this, however, the fourth Letter sustained the Drapier's previous remarks on Irish independence and brought the entire question of Irish rights and liberties to a startling climax.

In the opening paragraph of "A Letter to the Whole People of Ireland," the Drapier declares the reasons which prompted him to write this Letter. He sees that

Cordials must be frequently apply'd to weak Constitutions, Political as well as Natural,

and that

A people long used to Hardships, lose by Degrees the very Notions of Liberty (p. 67).

Thus, his fundamental aim in this Letter is to stiffen the fiber of Irish resistance and to redefine the "Notions of Liberty" for the Irish people. The first Letter and, to a great extent, the second and third Letters were principally intended to unite the people against Wood's halfpence, to advise them of the economic ills foreshadowed by Wood's halfpence, and to make them aware of their legal right to reject the coin. Such aims are no longer required, for the Drapier has totally succeeded in attaining these ends, as he readily admits:

And I believe there hath not been for many Ages an Example of any Kingdom so firmly united in a Point of great Importance, as this of Ours is at present, against that detestable Fraud (p. 67).

The immediate cause of the present Letter, the Drapier discloses, is precisely the same as that which brought forth the two preceding Letters: "Rumours industriously spread" in the newspapers, designed to alarm the Irish public and to weaken their opposition to Wood's coin. In this Letter the Drapier does not follow strictly the precise analytical method of refutation that characterized the second and third Letters. Rather, he passes swiftly over those points that he has previously emphasized and develops his discussion around the most pressing matters. Thus, he immediately disparages the news reports from London by stating flatly,

Wood prescribes to the News-Mongers in London what they are to write (p. 67).

Then, he lists the major allegations of Wood's report: that the Papists in Ireland have entered into an association against his coin, that the Irish dispute the King's prerogative, that they are grown ripe for rebellion and are ready to shake off the dependence of Ireland upon the Crown of England, and that the Lord Lieutenant is ordered to come over to Ireland to settle the matter of the halfpence (p. 68). The most significant fact about Wood's charges is that they are founded mainly on the Drapier's earlier Letters and that they afford the Drapier an opportunity to expand his statements on Irish liberty. Wood never seemed to realize that every time he made a public attack against the Drapier or the Irish cause, he was only priming the cannon that was destroying his brass castle.

To the statement by Wood that the Papists in Ireland are conspiring against him, the Drapier suggests that this charge must necessarily include the

Two Houses of Parliament, the Privy Council, . . .  
the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of Dublin, the Grand-  
Juries, and Principal Gentlemen of several Counties  
(p. 68),

inasmuch as they have all acted together to refuse Wood's coin. To the charge of disputing the King's prerogative, the Drapier answers in more detail. First, he dons his guise of humility and quotes an outside authority on the subject. He states,

I will only add the Opinion of the great Lord Bacon that as God governs the World by the settled Laws of Nature, which he hath made, and never transcends those Laws but upon High Important Occasions: So among Earthly Princes, those are the Wisest and the Best, who govern by the known Laws of the Country, and seldome make Use of their Prerogative (p. 69).

The inclusion of this quotation by the Drapier places the burden of guilt for the continued pressure of Wood's Patent directly on King George. And, in the event anyone has missed the point, the Drapier returns to the reliable device of overstatement, while at the same time he repeats the pertinent legal fact of the case. His tone is almost defensively humble and sarcastically compensative as he declares,

But we are so far from disputing the King's Prerogative in Coyning, that we own he has Power to give a Patent to any Man for setting his Royal Image and Superscription upon whatever Materials he pleases, and Liberty to the Patentee to offer them in any Country from England to Japan, only attended with one small Limitation, that no body alive is obliged to take them (p. 70).

Such a generous acknowledgment explodes in the face of the King when followed so mildly by such an absolutely restricting declaration. The Drapier has, indeed, removed the cardboard staging from beneath the paper tiger.

These arguments are really only preliminary exercises for the Drapier's central assault. On the one hand, he has reminded his readers of the general contempt in which the English government and Wood hold the Irish government. Also, he has implied the Crown's intention of imposing the halfpence on Ireland in spite of legal guarantees against such

an action. Now, the Drapier must dispel the present fear in the people resulting from the rumor of Carteret's trip to Dublin. In undertaking this task, the Drapier employs both emotional and legal arguments. His greatest touch, however, derives from his ability to become the true ironic character. His basic assumption--that Carteret could not possibly come at this time--is both naive and unsupported by obvious fact. The Drapier offers a list of reasons which tell why Carteret will not come to Ireland at this time. All of these reasons assume the integrity and justness of the English government. When Carteret arrives, the Drapier's reliance on the good faith of the English government is proved to be false. The facts, therefore, expose the Drapier's ingenuousness, but the injustice and tyranny of the English government also receive exposure.

The Drapier commences this ironical passage by establishing the distinction between Ireland and England in a manner designed to irritate the national pride of every Irishman. He states candidly,

We know very well that the Lords Lieutenants for several Years past have not thought this Kingdom Worthy the Honour of their Residence (p. 71).

Nevertheless, he mentions the rumor that Carteret is coming over and that the Parliament would assemble soon after his arrival. Naturally, the Drapier admits, such events should "portend some Unusual Business to be done." Now, the Drapier, in his simple, unassuming manner, makes his first



ironic assumption about the English government. He states,

It can never enter into my Head that so Little a Creature as Wood could find Credit enough with the King and his Ministers to have the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland sent hither in a Hurry upon his Errand (p. 72).

The genius of this statement exists in the assumption that the Lord Lieutenant is Wood's errand-boy. This choice of words seems hardly offensive when the reader considers such an event to be an impossibility. But, when the reader realizes that the Lord Lieutenant actually is coming to Ireland, presumably to settle the crisis, then his designation as Wood's errand-boy seems quite fitting, though perhaps not too proper. The Drapier, nevertheless, has managed to reverse the actual situation, and now instead of Wood being an agent of the English government, the Drapier portrays the English government to be the agent of Wood.

The Drapier continues in this vein by recounting the actual history of this affair, at the end of which, he repeats Wood's right to offer the halfpence and the people's right to unite against the halfpence. Thus, he concludes, the matter remains solely between Wood and the people of Ireland. In the face of these facts, the Drapier combines invective and naive disbelief as he frames an ironically brilliant rhetorical question.

Will any Man therefore attempt to persuade me, that a Lord Lieutenant is to be dispatched over in great Haste before the Ordinary Time, and a Parliament summoned by anticipating a prorogation, meerly to put a Hundred thousand Pounds into the

Pocket of a Sharper, by the Ruin of a most Loyal Kingdom (p. 72).

Certainly, no one would attempt to persuade the Drapier of such a preposterous notion. Yet, Lord Carteret's arrival removes the necessity for verbal persuasion, and the Drapier's basic premise is belied by the turn of events. The Drapier becomes the ironic speaker because he has naively closed his eyes to the facts. The artistry of his irony becomes evident by the manner in which his good faith in the English government is negated by Carteret's arrival, which thereby exposes the mischief and injustice behind the Lord Lieutenant's visit.

Such irony possesses the aim of discrediting the Lord Lieutenant and of depicting him in the worst possible light--as the conscious agent of William Wood. Nevertheless, the Drapier knows that Carteret is due to land in Dublin. Therefore, he cannot continue to base his argument on the premise that Carteret would remain in England. The Drapier's primary concern in every crisis is to advise and instruct his readers how to react in a given situation. Thus, after defaming and discrediting Carteret by the ironic denial of his arrival, the Drapier hypothesizes the possibility of such an event in order to dispel any doubts and fears held by the readers as a result of the Lord Lieutenant's premature visit. Consequently, the Drapier suggests,

But supposing all this to be true. By what Arguments could a Lord Lieutenant prevail on the same

Parliament which addressed with so much Zeal and Earnestness against this Evil, to pass it into a Law (p. 73)?

Once more, by use of the rhetorical question, the Drapier reminds his readers subtly of the political sovereignty of the Irish Parliament. He makes his readers aware that the only weapon legally in the hands of the Lord Lieutenant is argument, that the Parliament does not need to heed his arguments, and that Parliament alone has the legal right to make Wood's coin current in Ireland.

Having asserted Irish legislative independence and having put the Lord Lieutenant in his proper lawful position, the Drapier turns once more to ridiculing the unfairness and injustice that Ireland suffers from English oppression and corruption. He suggests,

And Supposing those Methods should be used which Detractors tell us have been sometimes put in Practice for gaining Votes. It is well known that in this Kingdom there are few Employments to be given, and if there were more, it is as well known to whose Share they must fall (p. 73).

Now the Drapier's concentration on Irish political liberty is so great that he blends into his attack on the Lord Lieutenant the notorious practice of denying political preferment to Irishmen in favor of Englishmen. Moreover, in order to make his inference clear, he names a list of high positions and the respective Englishmen who hold them in absentia, as well as specifying the salaries they draw, to which he adds resentfully and indignantly,

But the Jest is, that I have known upon Occasion some of these absent Officers as Keen against the Interest of Ireland as if they had never been indebted to Her for a Single Groat (p. 74).

Such a digression serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, it reminds the Irishmen of the political discrimination that they suffer. It also keeps their attention focused sharply on the immediate economic consequences threatened by Wood's halfpence. Nevertheless, the Drapier returns to the Lord Lieutenant's problem of corrupting the members of Parliament into voting for Wood's halfpence by offering them political employments. Although the Drapier has already emphasized that these positions are all held by Englishmen, he supposes

that a Hundred new Employments were erected on Purpose to gratify Compliers (p. 74).

The irony of this supposition bites deeply into the English government by removing all reasonable proportions from the case. England has sent the Lord Lieutenant to Ireland "meerly to put an Hundred thousand Pounds into the Pocket of a Sharper." Next, the Lord Lieutenant is about to assemble Parliament in a special session hopefully in order to legalize Wood's halfpence. Then, he will try to bribe the members of Parliament to vote against their wishes by the promise of high employment. All of these practices reflect the overwhelming corruption and injustice of the English government. But now, the Drapier supposes, England is prepared to create one hundred new posts solely for the purpose of bribing the Parliament to impose Wood's halfpence on

Ireland.

The Drapier does not need to turn his wrath on such a suggestion; the outrageousness of the inference is too great to inspire anger. Besides, the Drapier discloses,

It is not improbable, that a Gentleman would rather chuse to live upon his own Estate which brings him Gold and Silver, than with the Addition of an Employment, when his Rents and Sallery must both be paid in Wood's Brass, at above Eighty per Cent. Discount (p. 75).

Although the Drapier has effectively transcended the economic issues of the case, he does not allow his readers to forget this most basic objection to Wood's Patent. In truth, the financial disaster threatened by Wood's halfpence represented the central rallying point for all Irish opposition. Thus, no matter how far the Drapier might wander from the economic issue, he must constantly remind his readers that it still exists. In this case, therefore, he no longer needs to convince his readers of the possible economic ruin to be caused by Wood's coin. Rather, he uses this possibility as an accepted fact by which he proves a point of reasoning. At the same time, the Drapier is making a subtle condemnation of those members of Parliament who have previously complied with the English government against the interests of Ireland. He accomplishes this condemnation by assuming naively that some members could be corrupted by a sufficient bribe and by offering the baseness of Wood's coin as their only deterrent from temptation.

Having had a bit of fun at the expense of the heretofore compliant Parliament, the Drapier reverts to authority and law in order to weaken the position of the Lord Lieutenant. He speaks to his readers, as well as the Parliament, with calm logic as he declares,

And if, as I have often asserted from the best Authority, the Law hath Not left a Power in the Crown to force any Money except Sterling upon the Subject, much less can the Crown devolve such a Power upon another (p. 75).

The Drapier leaves no doubt in anyone's mind concerning Carteret's mission to Ireland. He is coming "to force" Wood's halfpence on the Irish in the name of the King. The Drapier's repetition of Carteret's legal position, however, virtually demolishes the psychological advantage the Ministry hoped to gain through the premature dispatch of the Lord Lieutenant.

Before proceeding to a new subject, the Drapier revives his previous attack on absentee office-holders for the purpose of emphasizing the greed of the English office-holders and their indifference to the welfare of Ireland. He states that the one "comfortable Circumstance" arising from the problem over Wood's halfpence is that all the English office-holders have united with the Irish against the coinage. He accepts this fact philosophically by stating,

Money, the great Divider of the World, hath by a strange Revolution, been the great Uniter of a most Divided people. Who would leave a Hundred Pounds a Year in England (a Country of Freedom) to be paid a Thousand in Ireland out of Wood's Exchequer (p. 77).

The clever phrasing of this final rhetorical question establishes England definitely as "a Country of Freedom." By omitting such an epithet for Ireland, the Drapier implies that Ireland is not a free country. Furthermore, the reference to the public funds of Ireland as "Wood's Exchequer" suggests that Wood now has become overlord of all Ireland.

While his discussion is centered on English office-holders, the Drapier takes the opportunity to put Archbishop Boulter in a compromising position. He declares,

The Gentleman They have lately made Primate would never quit his Seat in an English House of Lords, and his Preferments at Oxford and Bristol, worth Twelve hundred Pounds a Year, for Four times the Denomination here, but not half the Value; therefore I expect to hear he will be as good an Irish man, upon this Article, as any of his Brethren . . . (p. 77).

For one thing, the Drapier exposes the tremendous salary that Boulter will receive at the expense of the Irish people. Also, by stressing "upon this Article," the Drapier strongly implies that Boulter will support Ireland's interests, not out of any concern for Ireland, but because of his own personal greed. Swift knew very well that Boulter's appointment was a move by the English government to strengthen its hand in Ireland. If Boulter were to come out in favor of Wood's halfpence, the Drapier would not need to label him as the enemy. On the other hand, if Boulter were to oppose Wood's halfpence publicly, many people would be deceived

into trusting him as a friend of Ireland. Thus, the Drapier sets a trap for Boulter which will show him either as a political foe or as a greedy, self-interested parasite of the public weal. Nevertheless, this clever trap has little immediate bearing on the matter at hand. The important factor for the present moment is that the Drapier has managed to make an ally out of an obvious enemy. Instead of trying to take issue with Boulter's appointment, the Drapier merely implies the greed of the man and then enlists him in the Irish cause against the English government--the interests of whom Boulter has been sent to protect.

At this point in the Letter, the Drapier has essentially assuaged the fears raised in Ireland by the rumor of Carteret's arrival and to a lesser degree by the appointment of Boulter. He has subverted their motives and discredited their purposes. Moreover, he has restated Ireland's legal right to reject Wood's halfpence even in opposition to the Lord Lieutenant's demands. Still, he has not dealt entirely with the newspaper report accredited to Wood that he mentioned at the opening of the Letter. Thus, he repeats the principal allegations made by Wood.<sup>6</sup> In particular, he takes offense at the assumption in Wood's report that the Kingdom of Ireland is dependent upon England. Now, he focuses his argument directly on the matter of Irish

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<sup>6</sup>See above, p. 99.



independence, and Wood's halfpence no longer remains in his discussion even as a pretense for his declaration of Irish liberty. Controlled passion and undaunted determination rule the Drapier as he exclaims,

And this gives me an Opportunity of Explaining,  
to those who are Ignorant, another Point, which  
hath often Swelled in my Breast (p. 78).

Once more the Drapier demonstrates his ability to search the laws and to base his conclusions on legal fact. He quotes the actual law by which Ireland originally chose the English Monarch for its own. Then he continues,

I have looked over all the English and Irish  
Statutes without finding any Law that makes  
Ireland depend upon England, any more than  
England does upon Ireland. We have indeed  
obliged our selves to have the same King with  
them, and consequently they are obliged to have  
the same King with us (p. 78).

Here, the literal-minded, common sense of the self-educated Drapier serves its master most forcefully. The Drapier is no man to be deceived by a "Modern Term of Art." He seeks the literal and actual word of the law and proceeds logically from there. This ability gives dimension to his argument, for he sees to the very root of the language. Custom and accepted fashion do not deter him. Certainly England is the more powerful nation. Certainly Ireland chose to be reigned over by the King of England. Certainly the Kings of England have traditionally considered the Crown of Ireland as a subsidiary title belonging to the English Monarchy. But the Drapier does not recognize these facts. He only sees the

letter of the law under which it is as logical to assume that the English share the Irish monarch as it is to imagine that the Irish share the English monarch.

Now the Drapier assumes the role of the super-loyalist as he clearly defines the sovereign, political duty of an Irish citizen, and in typical fashion he steps forth as a personal, living example for his compatriots.

Let whoever think otherwise, I M. B. Drapier, desire to be excepted, for I declare, next under God, I depend only on the King my Sovereign, and on the Laws of my Own Country; and I am so far from depending upon the People of England, that if they should ever Rebel against my Sovereign (which God Forbid) I would be ready at the first Command from his Majesty to take Arms against them . . . (p. 79).

This declaration is ingenious not only because it expresses Ireland's sovereign independence under her own King and her own laws, but also because it unites Ireland and King George in a common cause against a hypothetically rebellious Parliament.<sup>7</sup> This fact becomes more evident when the Drapier declares,

And if such a Rebellion should prove so successful as to fix the Pretender on the throne of England, I would venture to transgress that Statute so far as to lose every Drop of my Blood to hinder him from being King of Ireland (p. 79).

This extreme position, which later caused this Letter to receive official censure, enlists the involuntary aid of the

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<sup>7</sup>In reference to this passage, Froude, I, 537, states that Swift chose his words "as to combine affected loyalty to the House of Hanover with loyalty to Irish liberty."

King in the assertion of Irish independence in much the same way that the Drapier solicited Boulter's backing against Wood's halfpence. More significantly, however, the Drapier's stand demonstrates that Ireland can serve only one master, and that is her own King.<sup>8</sup> Ireland has her own King and her own laws, and she is not bound by the acts of a rebellious English Parliament, or, for that matter, he implies, by the acts of the English Parliament under any circumstances. Therefore, in the next paragraph, the Drapier turns his full attention to the usurpation of Irish political power by the English Parliament.

Martin Price has said of the Drapier, he is "free of delusions of imaginary importance," and

his limited education makes him incapable of following refinements of political doctrine; he reduces every term to strict meaningfulness and thereby strips Power of its obscure pretension to Right.<sup>9</sup>

Certainly this statement applies to the Drapier's argument in the passages above, but this aspect of the Drapier's character perhaps appears even more strongly when he mentions how

the Parliaments of England have Sometimes assumed the Power of binding this Kingdom by Laws enacted there (p. 79).

Against this concept, the Drapier recalls, the "Famous

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<sup>8</sup>Ferguson, p. 119.

<sup>9</sup>Price, p. 70.

Mr. Molineaux" argued with "Truth, Reason and Justice," but England did not heed him and "the Love and Torrent of Power prevailed." At this point the Drapier's ability to illustrate his ideas with the most fitting and eloquent examples increases the impact of his insight. He begins his comment in the manner of a political philosopher and ends it in the manner of a political satirist, but at all times he speaks with the thunderous conviction of a great patriot.

For in Reason, all Government without the Consent of the Governed is the very Definition of Slavery: But in Fact, Eleven Men well Armed will certainly subdue one Single Man in his Shirt. But I have done. For those who have used Power to cramp Liberty have gone so far as to Resent even the Liberty of Complaining, altho' a Man upon the Rack was never known to be refused the Liberty of Roaring as loud as he thought fit (p. 79).

The Drapier makes no attempt to disguise his opinion that England rules over Ireland by force alone, without any moral or legal right to do so. In fact, he chooses his brilliant analogy of the man on the rack to emphasize that the oppression of the English Parliament has exceeded mere physical limitations and has now infringed on even the most basic civil and natural liberties. And just to be certain that the "Whole People of Ireland" understand the purpose of this digression, the Drapier adds emphatically,

I have digressed a little in order to refresh and continue that Spirit so seasonably raised amongst you, and to let you see that by the Laws of GOD, of NATURE, of NATIONS, and of your own Country, you ARE and OUGHT to be as FREE A People as your Brethren in England (p. 80).

Here, in essence, is the heart of the fourth Letter. Here is the matter that has long swelled in the Drapier's breast. Here is the true cause that impelled him to take arms against Wood's halfpence. Wood's Patent was simply the most recent and outrageous manifestation of English oppression. By rejecting and defeating Wood's project, Ireland could perhaps begin to win other concessions and regain other lost rights from England. In this sense Wood's halfpence possesses an important symbolic value for the Irish people. The great virtue of the Drapier is that he utilizes the symbolic value of Wood's Patent to the greatest degree in proclaiming Irish political independence, while at the same time he never allows Wood and his halfpence to lose their fundamental meaning as an immediate menace to Ireland's economy. This skillful combination of the real and the symbolic meanings of Wood's halfpence, by which the reader never completely loses sight of either, determines the artistic success of the fourth Letter. And it is precisely with this idea in mind that the Drapier returns to a short review of the pounds, shillings, and pence at stake in this venture before he closes the Letter by neutralizing Robert Walpole's support of Wood in the same subtle and ironic manner that he has already employed to neutralize or enlist Carteret, Boulter, and George I.

## VII

### i

On October 27, Carteret convened the Irish Privy Council and denounced the Drapier's "Letter to the Whole People of Ireland." At this meeting Carteret demanded that the Privy Council issue a Proclamation against the Letter and offer a reward for the discovery of its true author. The Privy Council, however, hesitated to condemn the Letter as a whole, for fear that such an action would tend to imply their approval of Wood's halfpence. On this point, the Privy Council refused to capitulate. Carteret, on the other hand, would not be denied in his determination to label the Drapier as a public enemy. Therefore, he suggested a compromise which was accepted by the Privy Council, who issued a Proclamation against the Drapier's fourth Letter, described as

a wicked and malicious pamphlet . . . in which are contained several seditious and scandalous paragraphs highly reflecting upon his Majesty and his ministers, tending to alienate the affections of his good subjects of England and Ireland from each other, and to promote sedition among the people.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the Proclamation offered a reward of "three hundred pounds sterling"--a sum that Swift later suggested would be paid in Wood's coin--for information leading to

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Craik, Appendix VII, p. 535.

the arrest and conviction of the Drapier. The Proclamation ended with the usual "God save the King." The Drapier, however, had already cemented public opinion so solidly against Wood's halfpence and the English government that as Swift read the Proclamation, he must have thought that it should have ended more appropriately with "God help the King."

Perhaps the greatest testimony to the universal approbation and unanimous confirmation of the Drapier and his ideas by the Irish people exists in the fact that not one person in that impoverished land attempted to collect the reward. It was no secret that Swift was the Drapier, although the government could not prove it and an informer was the major hope to establish proof. But no one stepped forward. On the contrary, a Biblical quotation appeared throughout Dublin which virtually acknowledge Swift's authorship of The Drapier's Letters and which mocked the Proclamation by its attestation of public support for him. The passage came from the First Book of Samuel, and its allegorical significance is obvious.

And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, and he died not.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Froude, I, 541.

Whether or not Swift instigated the circulation of this quotation is of little consequence. The important fact remains that this verse was memorized and repeated by countless citizens of Dublin. Such overwhelming affection must have produced a great sensation of pride in Swift, and such widespread approval and exuberant reinforcement of his ideas must have given him a tremendous sense of achievement. Public opinion had been created, molded, and solidified. The project of Wood's halfpence was now doomed to failure, and the people rejoiced with Swift in their mutual triumph.

Meanwhile, Swift had written a public letter under his own signature to Lord Chancellor Midleton. Although this letter bears the date of October 26, it still had not been printed and released by the end of the month. In this Letter, Swift undertakes politely and firmly to defend the Drapier from the charge against him of spreading the seeds of sedition and rebellion among the Irish people. His tone is subdued and his irony is calm as he respectfully asserts that because the people of Ireland are loyal and free, they would refuse Wood's coin even without the Drapier's prompting. He then repeats many of the Drapier's specific arguments against Wood's coinage. He observes that since the first three Letters received no public censure, he assumes them "to be without Exception." Finally, he comes to the paragraph in the fourth Letter--that in which the Drapier stated he would refuse to acknowledge the Pretender as King of



Ireland if by chance the English Parliament were to seat him on the English throne--which has caused the Letter to be condemned by Proclamation. Here, in seeking to exonerate the Drapier, Swift makes himself liable to official censure. He declares solemnly and respectfully, but with deep sarcasm,

I shall not presume to vindicate any Man, who openly declares he would transgress a Statute; and a Statute of such Importance: But, with the most humble Submission, and Desire of Pardon for a very innocent Mistake, I should be apt to think that the loyal Intention of the Writer, might be at least some small Extenuation of his Crime. For, in this I confess my self to think with the Drapier (pp. 132-133).

The balance of this letter repeats and defends many of the Drapier's arguments, and although Swift never reveals himself as the Drapier, he identifies his own views increasingly with those of the Drapier.

The favorable public reaction to the Proclamation against the Drapier tempted Swift to publish this letter and possibly to force the issue in a public trial. There is no certainty that Swift and Archbishop King consulted on this matter, but on October 30, King called on Lord Carteret to advise him that the Drapier was considering the possibility of exposing himself and undergoing a public trial. Unofficially, Carteret knew who the Drapier was, and officially Carteret and Swift were still friends. Carteret also knew he was on the outs with Walpole, and he was aware that by capturing the Drapier he would ingratiate himself so deeply with the King that Walpole could no longer ignore him. No

greater testimony to Carteret's true nobility and his deep respect for the bonds of friendship can be offered than his unequivocal reply to Archbishop King:

No man in the Kingdom how great and considerable soever he might think himself was of weight enough to stand a matter of this nature.<sup>3</sup>

A dishonest or ambiguous appraisal of the situation by Carteret probably could have drawn Swift into the open, thus rebrighting Carteret's political future; but he would not lie nor sacrifice his old friend for the sake of personal gain. Thus, Archbishop King must have persuaded Swift to remain silent and to hold back his letter to Midleton.<sup>4</sup> At any rate, Swift decided not to "put himself on the country" at the present time.

On November 7, an event occurred, the repercussions of which determined Swift's actions until the end of the controversy. On this day, the Drapier's printer, John Harding, was arrested for printing "A Letter to the Whole People of Ireland." Before Harding's case could be presented to the Grand Jury, Swift moved speedily to prevent

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<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Ferguson, p. 124.

<sup>4</sup>Faulkner, in the preface to his 1735 edition of Swift's Works, gives the following reasons for the withholding of this letter: "That the Writer finding how effectually the Drapier had succeeded, and at the same time how highly the People in Power seemed to be displeased, thought it more prudent to keep the Paper in his Cabinet" (Davis, p. 121). The second reason stated here seems to suggest strongly that King's advice of Carteret's position deterred Swift from printing the letter.

his indictment by publishing anonymously a short pamphlet entitled, "Seasonable Advice." In this paper, Swift undertakes, more moderately than he did in the letter to Middleton, to defend the Drapier and, in particular, the fourth Letter. He reminds the Grand Jury that without The Drapier's Letters, Wood's coin would doubtless have already overrun the country. Also he points out that the Drapier had no other motive in writing the Letters than "THE GOOD OF HIS COUNTRY." Likewise he explains and defends the Drapier's comments on the lack of legal basis for the common reference to Ireland as a "Depending Kingdom." Moreover, he points out that poor Harding, being incapable of analyzing the Letter in the manner of a lawyer, is really innocent of any statements in the Letter to which the lawyers might take exception. But by far the most important point that Swift raises in this pamphlet is that an indictment of the printer of the fourth Letter would imply to the people of Ireland that the Grand Jury of Dublin had come out in favor of Wood's coin. Such a conclusion would lead the people to believe that all Dublin would soon be using Wood's halfpence and that it would be useless to hold out any longer against them.

Swift's point was well taken. But before the Grand Jury received the bill against Harding, Carteret instructed his attorney general to hand the Grand Jury a bill against "Seasonable Advice." Nevertheless, the Grand Jury was convinced that an indictment against anything associated with

the Drapier and his cause would be tantamount to admitting Wood's halfpence into the entire country. They turned down the bill against "Seasonable Advice." Chief Justice Whitshed and his associates even took the Jurors aside one by one in order to convince them to make a presentment against the pamphlet. Still, the Jury refused. Thus, on November 21, Whitshed took upon himself the responsibility of dissolving the Grand Jury, an act that had been heretofore committed only one time in the whole history of Ireland.<sup>5</sup> So strong was public opinion by this time that one of the Jurors who voted to present the bill against "Seasonable Advice," a banker named Latouch, suffered "so violent a run upon him, that it was feared he would be obliged to stop payment."<sup>6</sup> The Drapier had, indeed, molded public opinion well.

On November 23, the new Grand Jury met. Nor was Whitshed able to badger this Jury into presenting a bill against "Seasonable Advice." He did not relent, however, and on the last day of the term, November 28, the Grand Jury handed Whitshed a presentment. The Grand Jury asserted its loyalty to the King and its interest in the welfare of Ireland; therefore, the presentment declares:

[We] do present all such persons as have attempted, or shall endeavour by fraud or otherwise, to impose the said halfpence upon us, . . . as enemies to His Majesty's government, and to the safety, peace and

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<sup>5</sup>Davis, pp. 1-11.

<sup>6</sup>Froude, I, 543.

welfare of all His Majesty's subjects of this kingdom.<sup>7</sup>

This was hardly the type of presentment Whitshed expected, but the worst part of it for him was yet to come. This statement in the presentment merely condoned the Drapier's cause and expressed disapproval of Wood's halfpence on economic grounds. But the final declaration of this presentment, given in the most solemn tone of allegiance, manifests approval and support of the very passage in the fourth Letter which brought forth the Privy Council's Proclamation and which led to Harding's arrest. The Grand Jury concludes:

So we do at the same time declare our abhorrence and detestation of all reflections on His Majesty, and his government, and that we are ready with our lives and fortunes to defend his most Sacred Majesty against the Pretender and all his Majesty's open and secret enemies both at home and abroad.<sup>8</sup>

The brilliant and subtle way in which this statement echoes the Drapier's language strongly confirms the notion that Swift wrote the presentment at the request of certain members of the Grand Jury.<sup>9</sup>

Swift could now relax and consider his work essentially

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<sup>7</sup>"The Presentment of the Grand Jury of the Country of the City of Dublin." Quoted in Temple Scott, Appendix V, pp. 233-234.

<sup>8</sup>Temple Scott, loc. cit.

<sup>9</sup>Davis, p. liv, quotes in a footnote from Thomas Sheridan, Life of Swift, the following comment: "Strong presentment, drawn up by Swift, at the request of some of the Jury."

completed. The refusal of the first Grand Jury to present "Seasonable Advice" made clear to the English government that the Irish opposition to Wood's halfpence was impenetrable and immovable. The presentment of the second Grand Jury, however, showed that the Irish resistance was now actively defiant of Wood's halfpence and boldly conscious of Ireland's sovereignty. The second Grand Jury had, in effect, united itself, as representative of the Irish people, with George I against the proponents of Wood's halfpence. Such an action came dangerously close to an absolute declaration of Irish independence. The resistance had become so rigid that the harder the Ministry strove to press it, the harder it threatened to recoil against the oppressors. Accordingly, on December 16, Carteret wrote a recommendation to the English Ministry that Wood's Patent be revoked and that Wood be given clandestine compensation for his trouble.<sup>10</sup> Other prominent members of the English interest in Ireland likewise realized the folly of further opposition to Ireland's demands. On January 19, 1725, Archbishop Boulter strongly recommended to the Ministry the revocation of Wood's Patent because

while fear of these halfpence hangs over this nation it is impossible to have things easy here.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Davis, p. lvi.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. lviii.

For the present, however, the Ministry remained obstinate and showed no willingness to accede to Ireland's wishes.

Swift realized now that the Drapier's task was at an end. Yet, he felt a desire to allow the Drapier to make a graceful exit from the public forum and to clarify his intentions in writing the previous Letters. Likewise, in the absence of any official move to rescind Wood's Patent, Swift doubtless believed that a gentle reappearance of the Drapier would hasten the retreat of Wood's forces. Thus, on December 31, 1724, John Harding, newly released from jail without ever having come before the Grand Jury, printed "A Letter to the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Molesworth" by M. B., Drapier. The Drapier prefaced this Letter with a short note to the printer in which he outlines his design in writing the Letter:

This ensuing Letter contains only a short Account of my self, and an Humble Apology for my former Pamphlets, especially the Last, with little Mention of Mr. Wood or his Half-pence, because I have already said enough upon that Subject, until Occasion shall be given for New Fears; and in that Case you may perhaps hear from me again (p. 100).

His final remark reveals once more the central purpose of The Drapier's Letters: to defeat the project of Wood's halfpence and to maintain a consistently strong opposition to it. In this duty the Drapier would set his hand to paper one more time within the next few months, but before that final Letter could be printed, Wood's Patent would cease to exist.

The tone of the "Letter to Molesworth" is humble and apologetic. The manner is fluent and informal. The Drapier subdues his emotions and assumes an air, almost of discouragement with his office of a writer, and most certainly of weariness with his task. Still, the language bears a charge of triumph and humble pride in the Drapier's knowledge of the vote of confidence given to him by the Grand Jury and the "whole people of Ireland."<sup>12</sup> The Drapier speaks with genuine humility and candid conviction when he advises his readers.

After strictly examining my own Heart, . . . I cannot accuse my self of any Malace or Wickedness against the Publick; of any Designs to sow Sedition, of reflecting on the King and his Ministers, or of endeavouring to alienate the Affections of the People of this Kingdom from those of England. All I can charge my self with, is a weak Attempt to serve a Nation in Danger of Destruction by a most wicked and malicious Projector, without waiting until I were called to its Assistance (pp. 101-102).

Even when the Drapier's modesty and calmest mood prevail, he cannot refrain from referring to Wood in the most defamatory language.

Now Swift doffs the mask of the Drapier almost completely as he develops an autobiographical statement of the Drapier's career which follows at every turn the career of Swift. He uses the language of the Drapier's trade to

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<sup>12</sup>Ferguson, p. 128, states that the fifth Letter "is Swift's celebration of his triumph at the Kings bench."



describe his Letters and the manner in which he fabricated them. Thus, he refers to his first Letter as

plain strong course Stuff to defend . . . against  
cold Easterly Winds (p. 103),

but he describes his fourth Letter as "the best Irish Wooll  
I could get." The present Letter, however, is made

only from the Shreds and Remnants of the Wooll  
employed in the Former (p. 104).

The metaphor is ingenious, and it clearly indicates the  
confidence and ease with which Swift now rollicks hand in  
hand with the Drapier before the admiring public.

Nevertheless, the Drapier wants to emphasize his  
innocence of the charges brought against the fourth Letter.  
Thus, he repeats the major allegation against him:

It is said that I WENT TOO FAR, when I declared,  
that if ever the Pretender should come . . . that  
I would lose the last Drop of my Blood before I  
would submit to him as King of Ireland (p. 107).

The Drapier's mild, apologetic reply to this charge reveals  
Swift's irony in its most subtle form. He actually plays  
on the possible ambiguity of the stressed phrase, "I WENT  
TOO FAR," in order to illustrate his own personal disdain  
for King George.

NOW if in defending my self from this accusation  
I should freely confess, that I WENT TOO FAR,  
that the Expression was very indiscreet, although  
occasioned by my zeal for his present Majesty and  
his Protestant Line in the House of Hanover, that  
I shall be careful never to offend again in the  
like Kind (p. 107).

The clever manner in which he phrases his hypothesis, whereby

he links his extremism to his zeal for King George, lends enough ambiguity to his conclusion to imply that he will no longer show any zeal for his Majesty. Furthermore, his supposed admission of going too far implies that his expressed loyalty to the King was "indiscreet." At any rate, Swift's personal disdain for King George glows brilliantly beneath the Drapier's solemn confession.

Again, in dealing with the objections to his remarks on Ireland's dependency, the Drapier retains his humble and apologetic tone. Nevertheless, his unerring logic does not forsake him as he subtly steers the question of dependency to the heart of the issue at stake.

Whether Ireland depend upon England, or only upon  
God, the King and the Law, I hope no Man will  
assert that it depends upon Mr. Wood (p. 109).

The Drapier has done with his arguments on Irish liberty and independence. What he has already said must suffice for now. He only wishes to remind his readers to keep the entire matter in its proper perspective. Thus, he returns to the original conflict between Wood and Ireland. He strips his argument here of all ramifications and asserts the basic right of Ireland to be free of Wood's influence.

The Drapier repeats some of his previous arguments and discusses some of the problems raised by the furor over Wood's coin. He takes the opportunity to castigate Whitshed for his dismissal of the Grand Jury. Finally, he reminds the people of their legal right to refuse Wood's coin and urges

them to "make use of that Liberty which the King and the Laws have left us." Then, in concluding, he calmly acknowledges his recognition that the matter has virtually ended, and he confesses his desire to retire from public life. He admits,

I begin to grow weary of my OFFICE as a Writer, and could heartily wish it were devolved upon my Brethren, the Makers of Songs and Ballads, who perhaps are the best qualified at present to gather up the Gleanings of this Controversy (p. 116).

This Letter marked the final appearance of the Drapier in public life. Swift knew that it was just a matter of time before Wood's Patent would be revoked. The English government in Ireland recognized the impasse, and recommendations to the Ministry to end the crisis became more frequent and more urgent. On March 24, 1725, Carteret prorogued the Irish Parliament for fear of assembling this body without definite word from England on the fate of Wood's Patent. Still, nothing happened. By August, Ireland was becoming uneasy. Swift prepared another Letter from the Drapier addressed "To Both Houses of Parliament." This Letter, he advised his printer, was to be issued on the exact day that Parliament convened. On August 24, however, Carteret prorogued the Parliament again until September 6. By now, tension in Ireland was extreme. Then, on August 25, official word arrived in Dublin that Wood had surrendered his Patent. Ireland had won, and the Drapier was a national



victory. Moreover, this victory was to have greater significance in years to come than the isolated act of heroism that wins a battle in a losing war; for, the Drapier's tactics revolutionized Ireland's entire method of warfare. In the words of W. E. H. Lecky,

He proved to them [the Irish], for the first time, that it was possible to struggle with success within the lines of the Constitution.<sup>14</sup>

Such a lesson would some day act to inspire all men to freedom, not only in Ireland, not only in the eighteenth century, but in all places and for all time.

## ii

Although The Drapier's Letters were not preconceived and planned as a single work of art, they fit together into a highly unified series of essays and they demonstrate a distinct development of theme and style. In the first Letter, the Drapier concentrates on two essential matters: he stresses Ireland's legal right to refuse the coin, and he discredits Wood and his coin. To accomplish the former, the Drapier cites the laws concerning coinage in great detail, and he presents the opinions of eminent lawyers on the subject. In this case, the Drapier relies solely on the sheer weight of fact and obligation of the law to impress his argument on his readers. Yet, the Drapier does

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<sup>14</sup>Lecky, A History, I, 458.

not stop after he has stated the facts. He wants to be certain that his readers understand his intention; thus he exhorts them to action in the thundering tones of a commanding general urging his army to victory:

Therefore my Friends, stand to it One and All,  
refuse this Filthy Trash.<sup>15</sup>

The Drapier's ability to insert some well-chosen invective into his exhortation gives added power to his words and influences the reader's attitude more profoundly. Thus, the Drapier proceeds from an argument based strictly on facts to an exhortation invoking emotion and employing invective.

The Drapier uses essentially the same procedure to discredit Wood's coin. He cites facts about the composition of the coin, and he projects calculations concerning the value of the coin. In this case, however, he distorts the facts willfully and exaggerates his calculations to an almost absurd degree. He accuses Wood's coin of having an intrinsic value of only one penny in a shilling. From this misrepresentation of fact, the Drapier builds a scale of values for Wood's coin which finds ultimately a local banker hauling his ready cash on the backs of twelve hundred horses.<sup>16</sup> Such exaggeration strikes a humorous note in the

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<sup>15</sup>See above, p. 63.

<sup>16</sup>See above, pp. 45 and 57.

reader and displays Wood's coin in a ridiculous light. Having established the intrinsic worthlessness of Wood's coin by this method, the Drapier speaks with seeming justification when he refers to Wood's coin thereafter as "Filthy Trash."

In the second Letter, the Drapier's anger overflows, and his emotion finds frequent expression through bitter and violent invective. In the first Letter, the Drapier disgraced Wood by associating his operation with that of a counterfeiter and by referring to his coin in terms appropriate for counterfeit coin. In the second Letter, Wood is established as a villain, and the Drapier pours abuse on him in order to arouse a deep hatred in his readers for Wood and his coin. In assailing Wood, however, the Drapier uses the technique of association to include King George and the English government in his harangue. Thus, at one place he refers to Wood as "a little Impudent Hardware Man" who dared "to prescribe what no King of England ever attempted," and in the next paragraph he draws the association more closely by labeling Wood, "this little arbitrary Mock-Monarch."<sup>17</sup> Wood is the direct object of the Drapier's wrath, but the Drapier has implicated King George in the affair. Henceforth, the Drapier moves the quarrel successively toward the King and the English government

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<sup>17</sup>See above, p. 74.

until, in the fourth Letter, he uses this same device to link Ireland and King George in a common cause against a hypothetically rebellious English Parliament.<sup>18</sup> Such an association asserts Ireland's legislative independence and her status as an individual nation.

Although the overall tone of the second Letter reflects the Drapier's anger, he often combines the insight of a highly logical mind with his denunciations of Wood. For instance, he applies the logic of common sense to Wood's offer to limit the total coinage to £40,000 unless the exigencies of trade required him to mint additional coin. The Drapier suggests, however, that Wood will judge the exigencies of Ireland by his own.<sup>19</sup> Thus, he twists his opponent's words to build his own argument by applying common logic based on the disreputability of Wood's character that he has already established. In so doing, the Drapier gives Wood a more sinister appearance than he had possessed heretofore.

In the fourth Letter the Drapier applies similar logic to the popular statement by Englishmen that Ireland is obliged to have the same king with England. The Drapier agrees wholeheartedly with this statement, but by reversing the phraseology, the Drapier points out that England

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<sup>18</sup>See above, p. 111.

<sup>19</sup>See above, p. 72.



likewise is obliged to have the same king with Ireland.<sup>20</sup> This simple logical device turns an actual disadvantage into a stated advantage. In the one case Ireland holds the status of a dependent nation, which in fact is true. But the Drapier's naive logic creates an ironical situation which finds England in the position of the dependent nation and which asserts Ireland's position as an independent nation under her own king and her own parliament.

The content of the fourth Letter is most notable for the Drapier's emphasis of Ireland's liberty and independence. The most remarkable stylistic attribute of this Letter, however, is the irony. The manner in which the Drapier reduces Walpole's alleged threat of making the Irish swallow Wood's coin "in Fireballs" to a point of absurdity demonstrates the ironic technique in its most effective form.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, the way in which the Drapier assumes that Lord Carteret would not possibly be "sent hither in a Hurry" upon Wood's errand "meerly to put an Hundred thousand Pounds into the Pocket of a Sharper"<sup>22</sup> shows the Drapier's ironic technique at its full strength. In this case, the Drapier emphasizes England's discriminating practice against Ireland by refusing to believe the rumors of Carteret's premature

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<sup>20</sup>See above, p. 110.

<sup>21</sup>See above, Chapter VI, footnote 4.

<sup>22</sup>See above, pp. 102-103.

visit to Dublin--an assumption belied by Carteret's actual arrival within twenty-four hours after the Letter had been printed. The ironic trap set by the Drapier thus portrays Carteret and the English government as the agents of Wood who intend to sacrifice the interests of Ireland to the personal enrichment of William Wood.

The fourth Letter, in effect, is the stylistic and thematic climax of The Drapier's Letters. In this Letter the Drapier brings together all of the various rhetorical and satirical devices of the Letters, and he uses them to emphasize and declare Ireland's liberty and independence. He still employs invective to remind his readers that Wood is a "sharper," and he still cites the fact that Ireland stands to lose "an Hundred thousand Pounds" from the imposition of Wood's coin. Yet, these two significant purposes of the Letters are subordinated in the passage mentioned above to the major ironical intention of stressing the discrimination Ireland suffers at the hands of the English government.

Although the Drapier uses irony to suggest Ireland's rights to have legislative independence and to be free of the discriminatory practices of the English Parliament, he eschews subtlety when he arrives at the crucial point in the fourth Letter. The rhetorical question had served the Drapier throughout the earlier Letters to bridge the often delicate strands between the issue of Wood's coin and the

issue of Irish liberty. In the second Letter, for instance, the Drapier implicates the King, the Duchess of Kendal, and Walpole when he denounces Wood by asking rhetorically,

Who are this Wretch's advisers? Who are his Supporters, Abettors, Encouragers, or Sharers?<sup>23</sup>

This question comes dangerously close to sedition, but the form of the rhetorical question provides him with a sufficient margin of safety to escape censure. At the end of the third Letter, he uses the rhetorical question again to make his point, but now he suggests more openly the crucial issue at stake in his Letters. He demands,

Were not the People of Ireland born as Free as those of England? How have they forfeited their Freedom?<sup>24</sup>

He has arrived here at the brink of the major theme of the later Letters, and in the fourth Letter he gives his readers the answers to these questions in no uncertain terms. He speaks in the fourth Letter with the righteous determination of a stern moralist and the unequivocal conviction of an inspired prophet as he proclaims vehemently,

By the Laws of GOD, of NATURE, of NATIONS, and of your own Country, you ARE and OUGHT to be as FREE A People as your Brethren in England.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, through irony and through invective, through

<sup>23</sup>See above, p. 76.

<sup>24</sup>See above, p. 87.

<sup>25</sup>See above, p. 113.

inference and through exhortation, the Drapier reaches the explosive climax of his Letters. His positive and relentless development of the theme of Irish liberty achieves forceful culmination in this declaration of freedom, which Henry Grattan doubtless recalled as he gave tribute to Swift in pronouncing the fulfilment of Ireland's quest for independence by stating,

Spirit of Swift, . . . your genius has prevailed.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>See above, p. 3.

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## A P P E N D I X

## APPENDIX

### A Chronology of Events Relevant to the Matter of Wood's Half-pence.

1722

- July 12            Date of Wood's Patent.
- August 7           The Commissioners of the Revenue in Dublin send a letter to Edward Hopkins, secretary to the Duke of Grafton, advising him that Wood's Patent would be "highly prejudicial" to the trade and welfare of Ireland and to his Majesty's revenue.
- September 19      The Commissioners of the Revenue in Dublin send a letter to the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury in London in order "to represent the ill effects of Mr. Wood's Patent."

1723

- August 13           The Duke of Grafton arrives as Lord Lieutenant in Dublin.
- August (16)        Date of Ireland's Consternation by James Maculla.
- September 9        The Irish Parliament convenes.
- September 13      Parliament asks the Duke of Grafton for a copy of Wood's Patent.
- September 14      Edward Hopkins advises Parliament that the Lord Lieutenant does not possess a copy of the Patent.
- September 16      Commons decides to investigate the matter of Wood's Patent. Hopkins arrives in Commons with a copy of the Patent.
- September 27      Commons sends a Resolution against Wood's Patent to King George.

- September 28 The Irish House of Lords sends a similar Resolution to King George. Parliament recesses.
- October 8 A Report of a reply by William Wood to the Resolutions of the Irish Parliament appears in the Dublin Flying Post.
- November 16 His Majesty's reply to the Resolution arrives in Dublin advising that he will "give the necessary orders for enquiring into" the affair.
- December 12 Parliament reconvenes.
- December 26 Both Houses of Parliament acknowledge the King's letter, but Commons adds a request that his Majesty keep his officers from "receiving and uttering" Wood's coin.

1724

- March 10 English Privy Council orders an investigation of the affair and asks Grafton to send "Papers and Witnesses . . . to support the objections made against the Patent."
- March (?) Publication of the first Drapier's Letter, "A Letter to the Shopkeepers."
- April 9 An inquiry into Wood's halfpence is opened before a Committee of the Privy Council at the Cockpit, Whitehall. The Duke of Newcastle advises Grafton that Lord Carteret will relieve him as Lord Lieutenant.
- April 27 Date of "Report of the Assay on Wood's Coinage, Made by Sir Isaac Newton, Edward Southwell, Esq., and Thomas Scroope, Esq."
- May 8 Grafton leaves Dublin.
- May 20 The Lords Justices of Ireland, the Irish Privy Council, and the Grand Juries of the City and County of Dublin send petitions to Lord Carteret requesting that no one receive or utter Wood's coin.
- July 24 Date of the Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Wood's halfpence.

- August 1 Harding prints a notice of Newton's Report and the Report of the Committee of Inquiry.
- August 6 Report of the Committee of Inquiry accepted by the English Privy Council. Publication of the second Drapier's Letter, "A Letter to Mr. Harding."
- August 20 Harding prints "The Declaration of the Grand Jury and the Rest of the Inhabitants of the Liberty of the Dean and Chapter of St. Patrick's, Dublin" against Wood's coinage.
- August 22 The Holy Trinity Guild of Merchants publishes a resolution against Wood's coin.
- August 29 Harding announces the third Drapier's Letter, "A Letter to the Nobility and Gentry of the Kingdom of Ireland."
- August 31 Hugh Boulter is appointed Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland.
- September 8 William Wood is burned in effigy in a public demonstration in Dublin.
- September 19 A petition from the City of Dublin against Wood's coin is printed in the Dublin Gazette.
- October 10 A report appears in the Dublin Intelligence alleging Robert Walpole's threat to make the Irish swallow Wood's coin in fireballs.
- October 21 Appearance of the fourth Drapier's Letter, "A Letter to the Whole People of Ireland."
- October 22 Lord Carteret arrives in Dublin.
- October 26 Date of the unprinted "Letter to Lord Middleton."
- October 27 Carteret convenes the Privy Council and condemns the fourth Letter. The Privy Council issues a Proclamation against the fourth Letter.
- November 7 Harding arrested for printing the fourth Letter.
- November (?) Swift publishes "Seasonable Advice" anonymously.
- November 21 The Grand Jury refuses to make a presentment against "Seasonable Advice" and thereby Chief Justice Whitshed dissolves the Jury.

- November 23 The new Grand Jury convenes.
- November 28 The new Grand Jury makes a presentment against "all such persons as have attempted, or shall endeavour by fraud or otherwise, to impose the said halfpence upon us."
- December 16 Carteret writes to Newcastle suggesting Wood's Patent be recalled.
- December 31 Publication of the fifth Drapier's Letter, "A Letter to Lord Viscount Molesworth."

## 1725

- January 19 Archbishop Boulter writes to Newcastle suggesting that Wood's Patent be revoked in order to "have things easy here."
- March 24 The Irish Parliament is prorogued until August 6.
- July 26 Richard West, the new Lord Chancellor of Ireland succeeding Midleton, arrives from England.
- August 19 Date of the letter from the Lords Justices of England to the Lord Lieutenant advising the surrender of Wood's Patent.
- August 24 Parliament prorogued until September 7.
- August 26 The Irish Privy Council learns officially of the Patent's withdrawal and proclaims the news publicly.
- August 31 Swift writes to Worrall to cancel the printing of "A Letter to Both Houses of Parliament."
- September 21 Parliament convenes.
- September 22 Commons presents an address of thanks to His Majesty.

1737

January

Boulter negotiates a patent for copper coin to be issued in Ireland. The Dean of St. Patrick's hangs a black flag from the Cathedral and tolls the muffled Cathedral bells.